

I'M SCARED OF  
GOING BACK  
TO PRISON  
Louise Woodward  
speaks for first time

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# INDEPENDENT

Thursday 5 March 1998 45p (IR 50p) No 3,550 \*

Newspaper of the Year for photographs

## Cyberterror attack rocks America

By Charles Arthur and  
Nicholas von Herzenstein

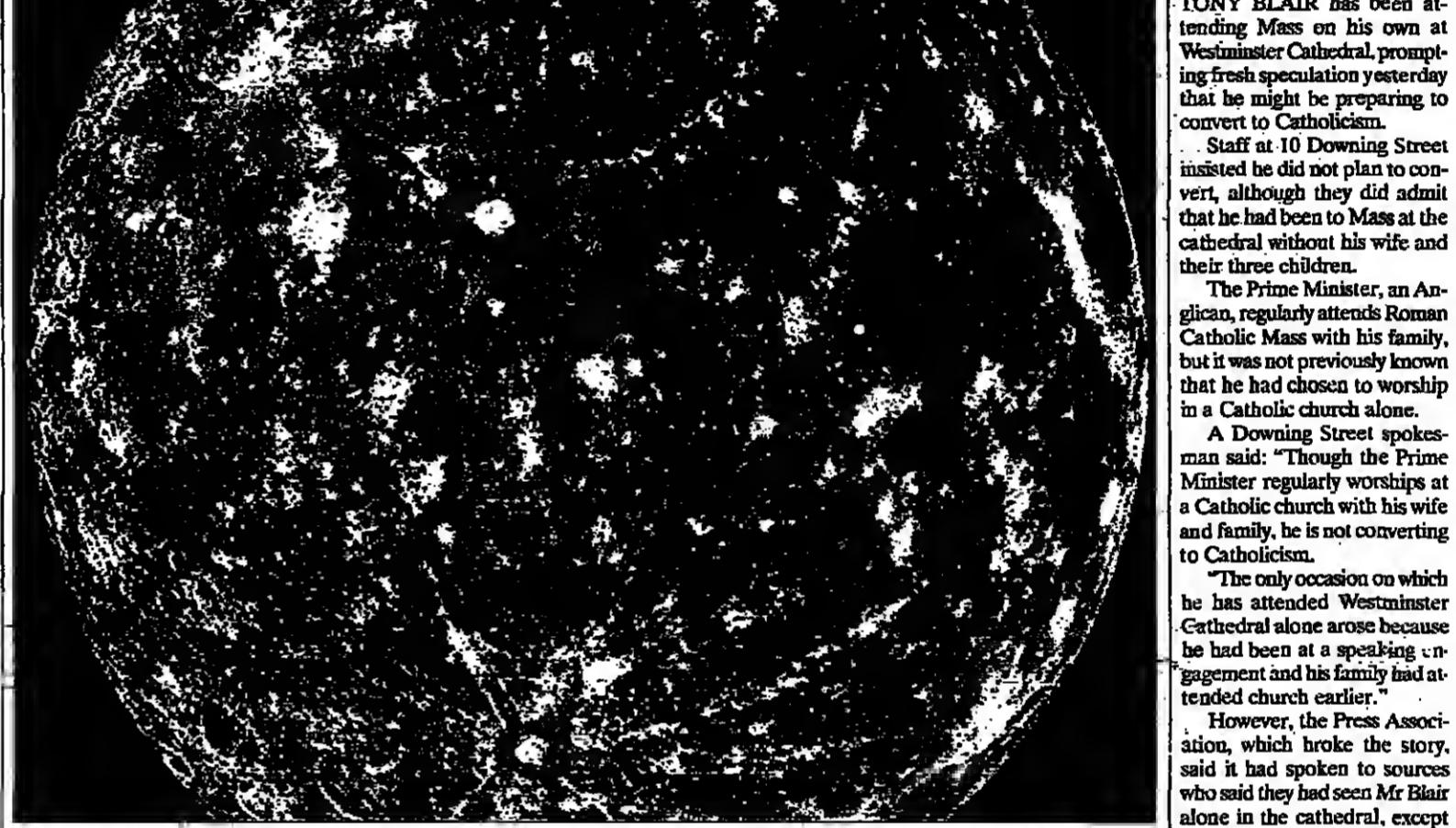
THE TWIN threats posed by cyber-terrorism and the growing monopoly of software company Microsoft became reality yesterday, as thousands of American users found their machines "frozen" by a cleverly-targeted attack launched over the Internet.

All over the US, machines running the Windows NT operating system and connected to the Internet crashed. Military machines operated by the Navy, and 14 of 15 of the US space agency Nasa's sites were affected, as well as many universities.

The deliberate nature of the attack was emphasised by its timing - hours before Bill Gates, head of Microsoft, had to defend his company to a Senate committee against allegations that it's growing control of the software market breaks anti-trust laws. Later the same day, Louis Frech, director of the FBI, appeared before another Senate committee to ask for increased funding for "several priority initiatives, including those

in the areas of counter-terrorism and cyber-crime". But industry analysts reckon the target of this attack was Gates, not Frech. The machines were all crashed by sending out a message over the Internet which exploits a feature of Windows NT - which Microsoft wants to become the dominant operating system for large business computers. However, the attack was tailored so that it would not cause actual harm: no data was lost, Dennis Jackson, head of the UK Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT), said: "It's the computer equivalent of a custard pie attack."

Steve Gold, news editor of *Secure Computing* magazine, and former hacker, explained: "Somebody sent out a deliberately malformed instruction to all the NT servers on the Internet in the US which caused them all to chase their tails trying to solve a problem that's impossible to solve, such as the value of  $\pi$  to a trillion decimal places." The attack clearly shows the weakness that Microsoft's growing monopoly causes to a



Damp side of the Moon: False-colour image of Earth's satellite taken in 1992 by the Galileo spaceprobe. Photographic: NASA

## Fatal ill-luck of friends across Ulster's divide

By David McKittrick  
Ireland Correspondent

PHILIP ALLEN and Damien Trainor lived together and then died together, the blood from their bodies mingling as they breathed their last on the floor of a little pub in Poyntzpass on Tuesday night.

A Protestant and a Catholic, they had the good fortune to live in a little oasis of community harmony amid the rolling drumlins of Armagh and Down. But they had fatal ill-luck to live within striking distance of other places which have been poisoned by deep wells of sectarianism.

The two friends were having a quiet drink on Tuesday night when loyalist gunmen burst in, shouted "Get down you bastards" and fired repeatedly into their bodies and those of two other people.

The fact of their different religions, and thus their different politics, did not interfere with the close friendship between the two men. Philip, who was 34, had just asked 25 year old Damien to be his best man.

Damien's uncle, Coleman Trainor, said yesterday: "All Damien lived for was cars and



Mo Mowlam visits relatives of the dead men yesterday

a few drinks along with his mate who was just married. They've grown up together as pals the way both their fathers did. The families have a long, long history - never any animosity among them, just the best of pals, the best of friends."

They were both drinking orange juice in the little bar when the gunmen arrived. Brian Cavanagh, son of the bar's owner, described the scene: "It was quite simple. There was two men came in through the front door of the bar and they shouted in very rude terms for everybody in the bar to lie down, and

everybody just lay down. They did not ask for denominations or anything, they just opened fire on the fellas that were on the ground."

When Father Desmond Corrigan was summoned to the bar he found the two fatally injured men. "I saw Damien and Philip lying on the ground just behind the door," he said. "I administered the last rites to Damien and prayed with Philip."

"They were still conscious at that stage and I tried to console them. I tried to talk to them, to encourage them, give them some hope. They responded for a short time, but then we were losing them. There was no pandemonium. Everyone was just trying to do whatever they could for the boys."

Poyntzpass is named after Lieutenant Poyntzpass an English officer given 500 acres of land by Elizabeth I in reward for defeating soldiers of the Earl of Tyrone. Until 9 o'clock on Tuesday night it was just one of many obscure backwaters, tucked away throughout Northern Ireland, which had made it through the troubles unscathed.

The village is majority Catholic, its surroundings

Continued on page 6

## Ice holds key to lunar living

THE US space agency, Nasa, is expected to announce today that there is water - frozen as ice - on the Moon, opening the possibility for new manned spaceships to our satellite, writes Charles Arthur.

The presence of water on the Moon would make it feasible to set up a permanent settlement, which could then be used to develop and test the technologies to colonise other planets.

Ice could be melted to form drinking water, or electrolysed by solar power into hydrogen and oxygen for rocket fuel. Some estimates before today's announcement suggested that there could be a billion tonnes of ice at the poles.

Nobody at Nasa would comment on

the rising expectations yesterday. But the space industry in the US has been buzzing for weeks about preliminary data from the Lunar Prospector

spacecraft, which has been orbiting the Moon for six weeks. According to early leaks, the first data confirmed spectroscopic data from a US military mission four years ago. That indicated that ice exists at the poles, probably the remains of comets which crashed into the lunar surface.

The scientists in charge of the mission are understood to have been told to check their data, so that Nasa would not subsequently have to retract any announcement. But in the past few days,

Nasa has issued a string of notices raising the profile of the mission and even offering live TV interviews with the scientists when the announcement is made at 10am in Florida today.

Earlier this week, Professor Alan Binder, who is leading the analysis of the data, told *The Independent*: "I'm not allowed to say what we have found. All I can say is that we have extremely good data, and we can't say whether there is or isn't water there."

But another source said: "The gossip is, from the preliminary results, the data would all be in keeping with water. Now they want the Prospector to go in closer to confirm it - even to crashland."

## British failed to spot Nazi mass killer

By Imre Karacs in Bonn

A 78-YEAR OLD convicted war criminal who had been living quietly in the south German city of Stuttgart, was arrested yesterday and charged with the murders of 70,000 people during the Second World War. He had previously been questioned by Alfonso Götzfried, who pro-

secutors say has admitted to shooting 500 men, women and children with his own hands at a Polish concentration camp, was a low-ranking officer in the

Nazi security police, and had previously worked for the Gestapo.

Even by the standards of mass-murderers, his alleged crimes seem extraordinary. The prosecutors believe he was a key player in the notorious "Operation Harvest Festival", a bloodbath that went on for two days at the Majdanek concentration camp, in eastern Poland, in November 1943. It was here that Götzfried credited himself with the 500 shootings. Altogether,

he is said to have played a role in the murder of 70,000 civilians in Poland and Ukraine in 1942 and 43. An estimated 360,000 people, mostly Jews, perished at Majdanek.

According to German records of war criminals, Götzfried had served in the SS, and was a member of staff on the Galician Security Police Command in Lublin. "He was no leading light," commented Willi Dressen, head of Germany's central archives.

Details of Götzfried's life after the war are sketchy. In the 1950s, he is reported to have been investigated for war crimes

by the British authorities. The Soviet authorities put him on trial and imprisoned him. He served part of his sentence in a forced labour camp in Siberia.

He was given German nationality in 1991. Last year he was called as a witness to the national war crimes centre in Dortmund. It was while being questioned there that Götzfried is said to have confessed to the "Harvest Festival" massacre and other killings. He applied for bail after his arrest. "Where am I supposed to run?" he is reported to have asked.

Mr Blair has voted in favour of abortion some 13 times since he was voted to Parliament in 1984.

"His conscience is his own business but I think his attendance at Mass is hypocritical.

"If he wants to go to Catholic Mass he should embrace its teachings and become a Catholic - and that is incompatible with his political beliefs."

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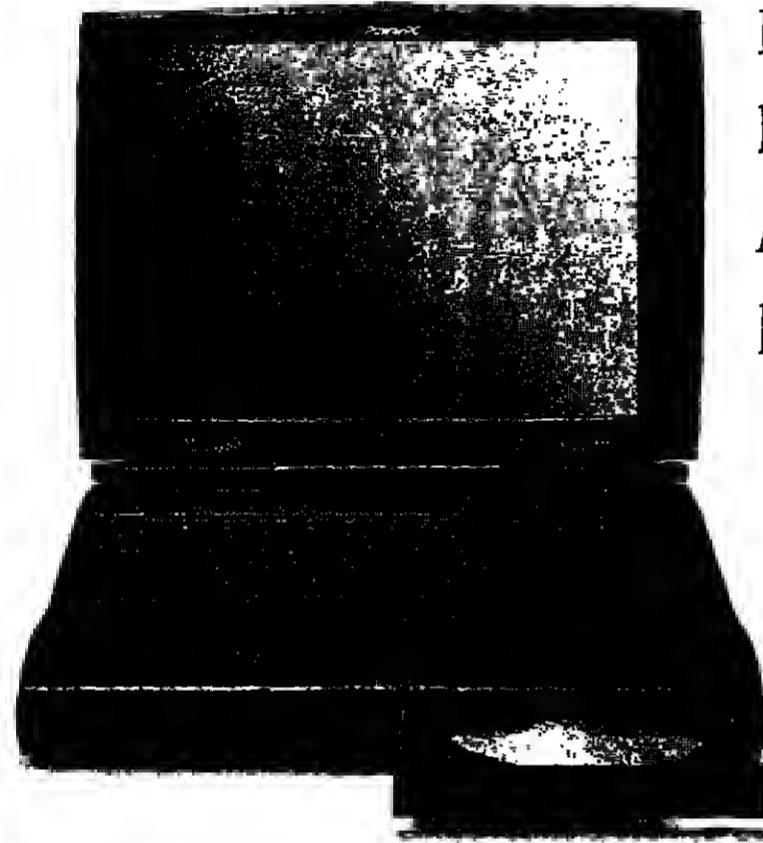




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مكتبة الأرشيف

# 'I am scared of going back to jail'

LOUISE WOODWARD, the British nanny convicted of killing baby Matthew Eappen, has spoken for the first time about her hopes and fears as she prepares for an appeal against her conviction tomorrow.

While the 20-year-old from Cheshire waits to learn her fate in the American courts, a team of eminent British neurologists and pathologists have concluded after studying the evidence that she is the victim of a miscarriage of justice.

The British experts are highly critical of their US counterparts, and unanimously agree that Matthew was suffering from a three-week-old injury, "and the slightest thing could have caused it to bleed again".

Woodward's fate - whether she is freed to leave the country or returned to jail - will be decided by seven judges at Massachusetts Supreme Court tomorrow. In an interview with Channel 4's *Dispatches* programme, she says: "Everyone tells me not to worry. But I am scared - I am scared of going back to jail. My best hope for the appeal right now is that they would say well this was ridiculous, should never have gone to trial, acquit her, let her go."

"I always thought that I would be exonerated anyway through the trial just by putting up a good defence and creating a more than reasonable doubt that I would be cleared and I had all these images of walking out of the courtroom, you know it didn't quite go to plan ...

"I guess the best I can hope

The waiting is nearly over for Louise Woodward, the nanny convicted of manslaughter. Kim Sengupta reports

killing Matthew. If that request is rejected they will ask the court to confirm the trial judge's reduction of the charge and accompanying 279-day jail sentence. The prosecution will ask the appeal judges to reinstate Ms Woodward's second-degree murder conviction, which carries a life sentence.

The defence and the prosecution will each have 25 minutes to present their cases. The judges will deliver their verdict "in weeks or even months time", according to court official Liz Fearnley.

Mr Scheck, speaking for the first time about the appeal says: "If Louise loses this she could spend the rest of her life in jail and since I believe very much we have proven that this is an old injury and that she couldn't have done what she was accused of doing I find that unimaginable, so it's pretty scary".

Woodward says she has no regrets about still being in the US. She continued: "I am kind of glad in a way that I didn't just leave court and then get on the next plane and get the hell out of America ... because it makes me realise America isn't all bad ... I've met a lot of nice people and it's given me some time to get myself together again."

Woodward's lawyers, led by Barry Scheck, will ask the Supreme Court to clear her of



Louise Woodward: 'Everyone tells me not to worry but I am scared. I am scared of going back to jail'

Photograph: Jim Bourg/Reuters

## Paedophile must go, say residents of Milton Keynes

By Glenda Cooper  
Social Affairs Correspondent

MORE than 100 angry residents of Milton Keynes were expected to start a campaign last night for the convicted paedophile Robert Oliver to be moved out of their area.

They say they are incensed that Oliver, jailed for the killing of 14-year-old Jason Swift, is having treatment at the medium secure unit Blenheim House, after being bailed out of several towns.

Thames Valley Police confirmed yesterday that Oliver was at Blenheim House clinic. "The police and other agencies in Milton Keynes want to reassure the residents and re-emphasise appropriate supervision is being given to Mr Oliver and he does not present any danger to the public," said a spokesman.

But residents claim that they have betrayed them by taking Oliver, who is there voluntarily. They say when the unit was set up only people detained under the Mental Health Act were to be treated there.

"In my personal view they are putting money before the welfare of the citizens of Milton Keynes," said Steve Coveney, a local councillor.

Oliver had served eight years of a 15-year sentence after being convicted of the manslaughter of Jason, who was throttled and gang raped in a flat in east London. Since being released

from Wandsworth Prison in September last year and registering on the national paedophile register, Oliver has been bailed out of Swindon, London, Dublin, Liverpool and Manchester. He cut his hair and wore glasses, but when he arrived in Brighton, social services sent warning letters to the parents of 27,000 children in the town.

As a result he ended up in the police cell for four months for his own protection, but Sussex Police estimated that it cost the public £50,000 - £400 per day - to keep him under lock and key. Sex offender treatment centres refused to take him but Blenheim House, a new centre agreed.

"He can walk out whenever he likes," said Roy Copeland, who has helped organise the meeting. "It's right next to a hospital. In two or three minutes he can get to schools and nurseries if he chooses to do so. We want to protect the children of Milton Keynes. It's not a question of passing the buck ... we want the law changed, so there are tougher sentences and they are kept in more secure places."

But Ray Wyne, a therapist who has worked for many years with sex offenders warned: "Whatever we do to work with sex offenders people don't want us there. There is a major misunderstanding. Robert Oliver could live in a bedsit in Milton Keynes if he wanted and no one could do anything. He is not subject to statutory supervision."

## Women 'bombarded' with fertility drugs

By Jeremy Laurance  
Health Editor

Infertile women seeking test-tube baby treatment are being bombarded with drugs to stimulate ovulation, increasing the costs and deterring patients, a leading fertility expert said yesterday.

Professor Robert Edwards, who started the fertility revolution 20 years ago with the birth of Louise Brown, the world's first test-tube baby, said women were being dosed with too many hormones in each treatment cycle.

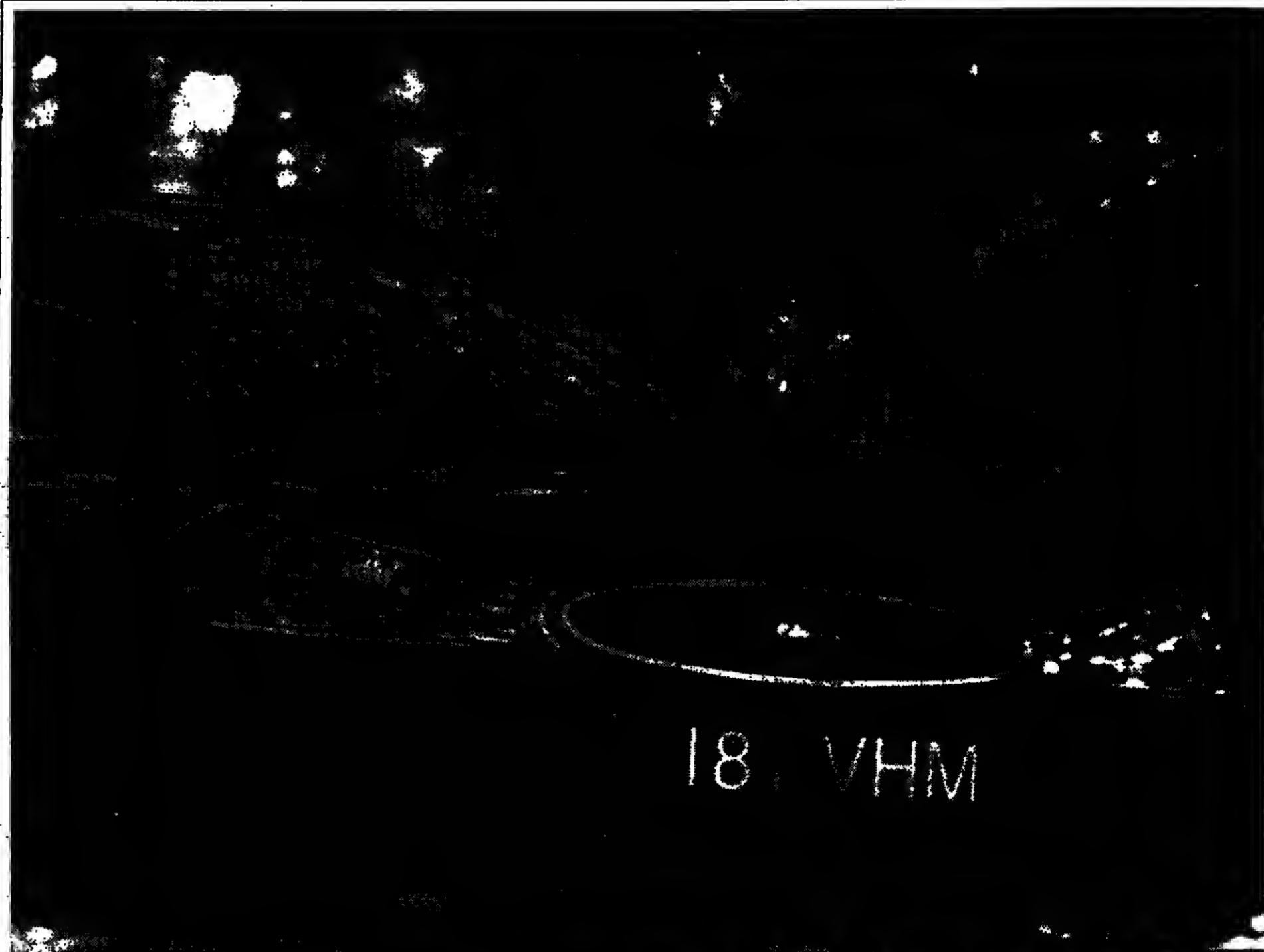
"We are seeing ever more drastic ovarian stimulation when we should be striving for simpler forms of treatment. Currently technologies are too expensive, which means *in vitro* fertilisation is not available to sufficient couples. It should be made available at much cheaper prices."

Professor Edwards, of the

University of Cambridge, said women were routinely given 10 to 20 injections of different drugs to stimulate ovulation and up to 50 eggs were being retrieved. "What do we do with 50 eggs? I want four or five excellent eggs and embryos. This has got to go."

"We are doing things I think we should not be doing. In Oldham we used very low levels of hormones to stimulate patients. Since IVF spread worldwide it's turned into a pharmaceutical nonsense. We can't go on treating patients like this."

Speaking to a conference in London on IVF, Professor Edwards said cutting costs was key to making the treatment more widely available. Over the last 20 years, 300,000 IVF babies have been born worldwide, but there were thousands more couples who could benefit but were denied treatment because of the cost.



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Catholic Damien Trainor shot while having a drink with his friend

## Shockwaves from killings rock the peace process

By David McKittrick  
Ireland Correspondent

THE British and Irish governments and local political parties yesterday sought to shelter the peace process from the shockwaves generated by Tuesday's night's double killing in Poyntzpass.

Together they produced waves of condemnation which reflected the poignancy of the fact that loyalist extremists, in their efforts to damage the process, had killed Damiano Trainor, a Catholic, and Philip Allen, a Protestant, who were close personal friends. Church leaders also joined in the condemning the shootings.

Unionist and nationalist leaders combined in unusual singleness of purpose in expressing their condemnation, with the Ulster Unionist leader, David Trimble, and Seamus Mallon, deputy leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, taking the uncommon step of visiting the homes of the bereaved together.

Many took comfort in the fact that the violence for once seemed to lead to a closing of political ranks rather than a sowing of relationships. At the same time, both the political and

security worlds are reluctantly coming to terms with the fact that the violent capabilities of those opposed to the process is growing at a disturbing rate.

The two killings are being laid at the door of the Loyalist Volunteer Force, the group founded by the assassinated loyalist Billy Wright. This means the LVF has carried out seven killings since Wright's death in late December, thus proving itself to be a major menace.

On the republican side, meanwhile, breakaway groups have also shown an ability to increase their bombing attempts, providing further worries for all concerned. The Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, warned that there would be further attacks, adding: "That is the brutal reality of these things."

Tony Blair told the Commons: "We can all use the normal and right but ritualistic language about an evil atrocity and these appalling murders and how senseless and wicked they are – and they are all of those things."

"But I think that these two men who were murdered last night – two friends across the community divide – in a sense symbolised the future in Northern Ireland and those gunmen, in

the evil atrocity they committed, they symbolised the past."

His sentiments were echoed by the Catholic Archbishop, Sean Brady, who described them as killings which had not just claimed two young lives but cut to the heart of what the people of Northern Ireland held dear, and which gave them hope.

Mr Trimble said after visiting the families: "I am ashamed to think the perpetrators of this deed were Protestant. They were serving our cause and on behalf of the Unionist community I repudiate them and I repudiate their associates."

"All they are doing is killing off the hope we are trying to engender. But despite, and mainly because of this, we are going to try to continue to do our best to bring some political stability."

Mr Mallon added: "Our presence today, visiting these families together, is a clear indication to the entire community that the people who carried out these murders will not be allowed to drive a wedge between us."

Three men were last night being questioned about the attack. They were detained in the mid-Ulster areas several hours after the shooting.



Philip Allen had asked Damien to be his best man. Photograph: Pacemaker

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## Terrorists laid bare by authors on the inside

Lucrative royalties have eased informers' fears of retribution says Ian Burrell

As Northern Ireland peace-makers attempt to lure the terrorists out of the shadows, an unwanted spotlight is being shone on the gunmen by the publishing industry.

One by one, reformed terrorists and secret agents who were paid to work inside paramilitary groups are going into print to describe their cell structures, operations and internal politics.

The prospect of lucrative royalties has helped to ease the authors' fears of retribution from terrorist squads. One book is already a best-seller, and three more are expected to attract great interest, not least from the terrorists themselves.

Today sees the publication of Raymond Gilmour's *Dead Ground*, detailing his nine years masquerading as an IRA terrorist while working for the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Gilmour joined the INLA at 16 before switching to the IRA, where he became a member of the elite Brandywell cell in Londonderry, whose operations he constantly thwarted by tipping off his RUC handler, known only as Pete. "In my time I saved hundreds of lives," he said.

Gilmour's cover was blown in 1984 when he told Pete that the IRA had taken possession of an American heavy-duty assault rifle. It was a fact known only to a handful of terrorists and Gilmour knew he would be exposed.

When he later admitted to his wife, Lorraine, that he was an RUC agent, she broke down in tears and begged him not to pursue his plan of giving up her pregnancy evidence.

In 1984, the case against 35 men implicated by Gilmour collapsed in court. Since then he has lived in hiding.

## Ulster killings

FROM FRONT PAGE  
majority Protestant. It is free of the flags, bunting and slogans which both decorate and deface so many towns and villages: lying between loyalist Portadown and nationalist Newry it has chosen not to display its colours.

The fact that it has never experienced shootings or bombings meant that yesterday its residents exuded, in addition to their grief, shock, bewilderment and disbelief. An old man who had just attended morning Mass said: "In all my years it's the worst night I ever remember in Poyntzpass."

The village's three pubs are all Catholic-owned, but all have mixed clientele, a fact which bolstered the general assumption that they would not be targeted by loyalists.

Unlike many Belfast pubs which are festooned with metal doors, cameras and other precautions, the bar had no security: all the gunmen had to do was turn the handle and walk in.

The gunmen are today probably celebrating their achievement of adding two more names to the list of the dead. They will congratulate themselves on having killed Damien, because he was a Catholic.

They will be less happy about killing Philip because he was a Protestant, but will console themselves with the thought that he brought it on himself by drinking in a Catholic-owned bar with a Catholic friend. "He shouldn't have been there," a loyalist source once explained about a past shooting. "He shouldn't have been mixing like that."

In the village everyone hoped that community relations would survive the killings, and many hoped the peace process would bring an end to such murder.

Great efforts will clearly be made to achieve this, but the brutal fact is that the Allen and Trainor families will now never know peace, and that the village will be indelibly stained with the blood of two friends.

## Philanthropist wins cash prize

THE WORLD'S largest annual cash award outside the sporting arena, the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion, has been won by Sir Sigmund Sternberg, a philanthropist and businessman.

Sir Sigmund (right), who made his fortune through metal trading and real estate, is chairman of the Executive Committee of the International Council of Christians and Jews. He has won £750,000 – more than the Nobel Prize – for his work in "advancing the world's understanding of God and/or spirituality".

Through his work at the ICIJ and the Sternberg Centre for Judaism in London, Sir Sigmund, 76, has worked to promote co-operation, harmony and understanding among the world's religions. He said yesterday that he was humbled by the award. "Nothing I have done, in any sphere, prepared me for myself to be the recipient of this most prestigious and meaningful of prizes. Quite the contrary."



## GW trains are slow and late, so why should the bosses be making millions?

By Randeep Ramesh  
Transport Correspondent

HE is the man who derided the sell-off of the nation's railways as a "folly". Yet yesterday Brian Scott, the chief executive of Great Western, was a green light away from becoming a multi-millionaire from the privatisation he denounced in 1993.

Five years ago, Mr Scott - who has risen from a humble station master to head of one of Britain's biggest networks - wrote to the then transport secretary, John MacGregor, saying: "as an experienced, professional railway business manager, I would not put my money into a train-operating company."

Fortunately he did not take his own advice. FirstBus, a bus and rail group, confirmed yesterday it was in the "advanced stages" of buying up Great Western, which runs trains from London to Wales as well as commuter services in the north west. The estimated £200m deal, which would see Mr Scott's £37,500 investment in 1996 rise by 133 times to £5m.

Other directors about to board the gravy train include Richard George, former British Rail high-flier, who is set to make more than £3m from an investment of about £40,000 and Mike Carroll, the company's marketing director, who will pocket around £2m from seed capital worth less than £30,000. If the takeover is approved, seven GWH directors could well net more than £10 million between them. The deal will not impress the train company's customers. Dubbed "Late West-

ern" by passengers, nearly 20 per cent of services are "officially" late and punctuality is so bad that season ticket holders can now claim cash back from the company.

Local passenger groups have also accused the company of lengthening journey times by up to 7 minutes so it can improve punctuality. One regular traveller said yesterday: "It used to be known as God's Wonderful Railway. Now it is among God's worst."

Save Our Railways, the rail pressure group, yesterday wrote to both John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, and John Swift QC, the rail regulator, asking them to block the sale and "derail this out-of-control gravy train".

Jonathan Bray, SoR's campaign director, said: "Trains are now slower, later and more complained about than under public ownership. Yet in the crazy world of privatisation this means the management will be rewarded with a publicly-subsidised, multi-million pound pay-off."

Local Labour MPs have also voiced their concerns. Dr Doug Naysmith, Labour MP for Bristol North West, criticised the possible sale and described the Great Western service in recent weeks as "utterly appalling".

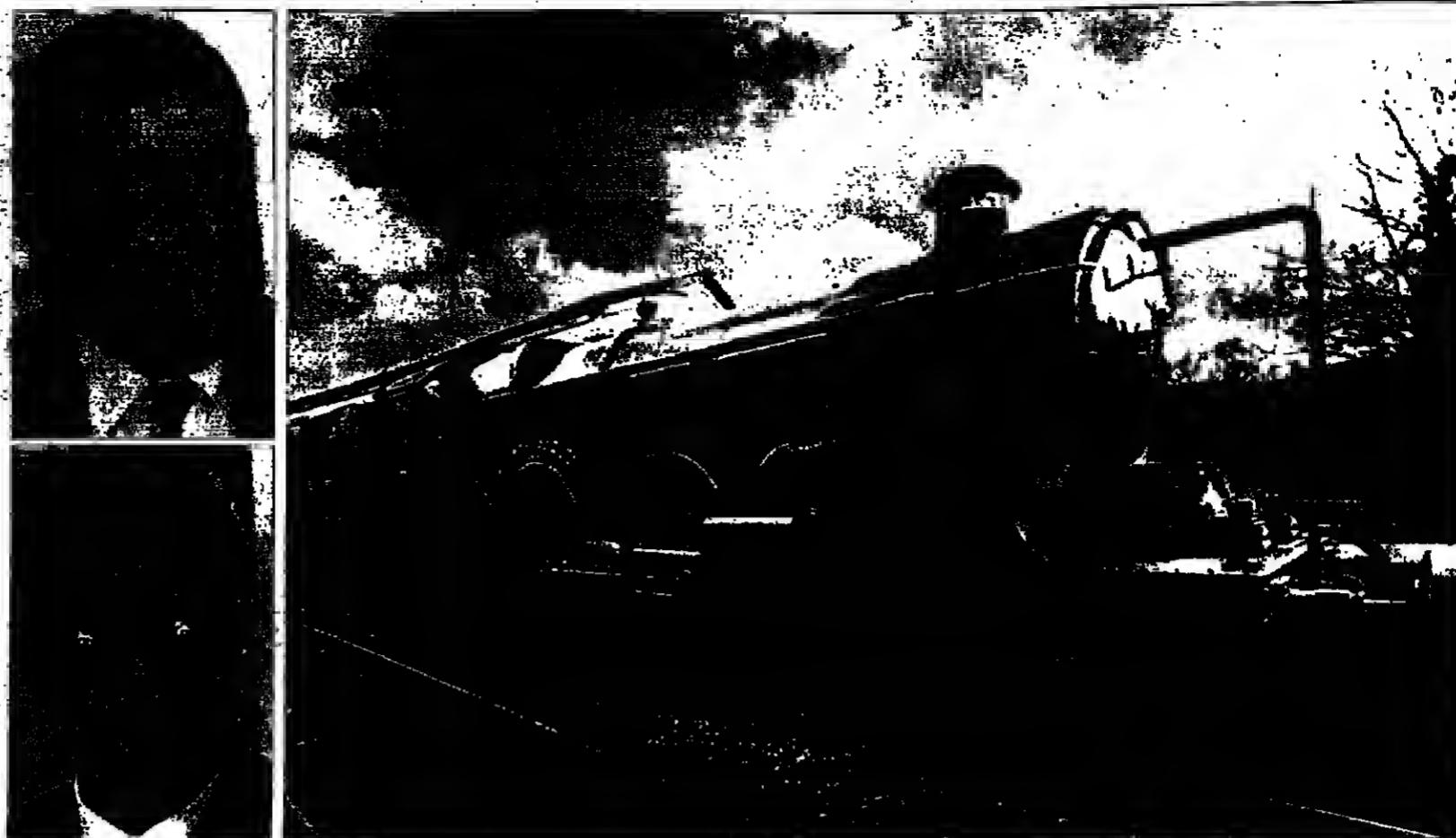
The deal, which would see FirstBus up its stake from 24.5 per cent, is far from complete. John O'Brien, the franchising director, who sold off the railways, could put pay to any buyer. A source close to Mr O'Brien said that the key to any change in the ownership was "how would the passenger benefit".

### Hasty BR sale cost taxpayers millions

THE last Tory Government's eagerness to sell off British Rail's operations as quickly as possible cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of pounds, a report by the National Audit Office revealed yesterday.

The Department of Transport received £1.8 billion from the sale of the three rolling stock leasing companies. Yet within months they were re-sold for a total of £2.65 billion in deals which made multi-millionaires of some managers, writes Randeep Ramesh, Transport Correspondent.

The first sale - of Porterbrook leasing in 1996 to bus giant Stagecoach - came just 7 months after it was privatised.



All aboard: directors Brian Scott (top) and Richard George are set to become wealthy. But the modern Great Western falls well short of the standards set by its namesake in the 1930s and 1940s when the preserved locomotive Defiant headed the express trains

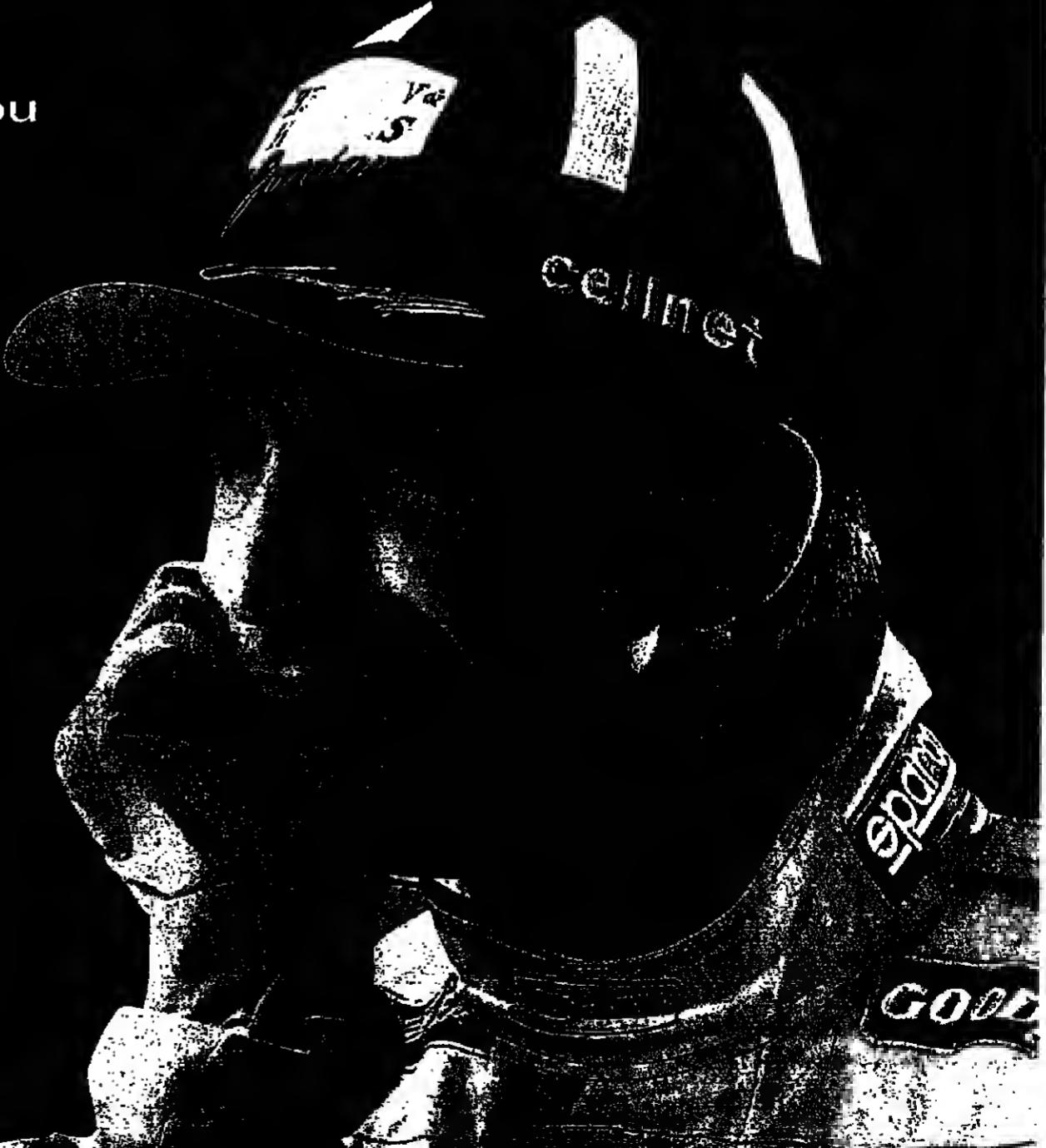
Main photograph: David Ashdown

It used to be known as God's Wonderful Railway. Now it's among God's worst

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# Whips pressure MPs to block vitamin inquiry

By Anthony Bevins  
Political Editor

GOVERNMENT whips are risking a Commons row – and a possible charge of contempt of Parliament – by putting backdoor pressure on Labour MPs to block a select committee inquiry into Vitamin B6.

The *Independent* reported on Tuesday that the agriculture committee had formally decided to investigate controversial government plans to curb the sale of Vitamin B6.

But at a private meeting of the committee on Tuesday morning, that decision was re-opened by Peter Luff, the Conservative chairman. The *Independent* has been told that some of the Labour MPs on the committee protested that the inquiry decision had been taken in their absence, and the question is to be discussed again next Tuesday.

Mr Luff told the PA news agency on Tuesday night: "We have not taken a decision yet, but it's under consideration by the committee."

In fact, a decision had been taken, but it had been decided to reconsider it following the Labour protest.

Any hint of pressure from the whips is bound to backfire, and it is now expected that the inquiry will be given the go-ahead next week. If the Labour majority was mobilised to vote down the inquiry, it is possible that a formal complaint would be made about whips' pressure to the Commons Committee on Standards and Privileges.

The last time a government whip put pressure on a Commons select committee was in October 1994, when David Willets, the former Tory whip, was alleged to have brought improper pressure to bear on an investigation into Neil Hamilton and the cash-for-questions affair. In December 1996, Mr Willets was censured for discussing the work of the committee with its chairman.

Under government proposals, over-the-counter B6 sales of more than 10 milligrams a day will be restricted to pharmacies and any doses over 50mg a day will have to be prescribed by a doctor.

Marion Allen, chairwoman of the National Association of Health Stores, said yesterday that the agriculture committee should resist party pressure to abandon its inquiry.

"The inquiry would examine why Vitamin B6, taken by millions of Britons in doses up to 200mg daily, is under threat," she said.

"Since the Government announced proposals to restrict its

free sale to just 10mg, MPs have received more than 100,000 protest letters and a report from 200 doctors and scientists rejecting the decision as 'wholly inadequate consideration of the scientific data'."

I take 100mg of Vitamin B6 on a daily basis to help maintain my general health and to ease the discomfort of pre-menstrual tension." Many such letters, it was said, had been signed by men.

The ministry said the Government was acting on advice from the Committee on Toxicity, that large doses could damage people's health. The spokesman said the maximum daily dose permitted in other European Union member states was 6mg – as was the case in Germany.

## Crash pilots' families lose fight

The families of two helicopter pilots yesterday failed in their attempt to get a select committee investigation into the Chinook crash on the Mull of Kintyre in which 25 intelligence officers were killed, writes Cliff Brown.

Bruce George, the Labour chairman of the Commons select committee on defence, made it clear at the start of its hearing that the committee could not act as a substitute court of appeal over the findings of an accident investigation which found the two pilots, who died in the crash, guilty of gross negligence. The families of the pilots have been fighting for their names to be cleared, claiming that the pilots may have switched off a hi-tech on-board computer system because they were worried about its performance.

John Reid, minister of defence, said he had looked again at all the evidence over the past 48 hours with "compassionate eyes" and had found nothing to challenge the inquiry findings. He stressed that he would be prepared to look at any new evidence.

He was challenged over the reliability of the computer system by Menzies Campbell, Liberal Democrat spokesman on defence, and Crispin Blunt, a former adviser to the ex-Tory defence secretary Malcolm Rifkind, who was in office at the time of the crash.

Mr Blunt raised serious questions about the reliability of the computer system, code-named FADEC, raised by a former test pilot, Squadron Leader Robert Burke. The defence minister said there was no record of any incidents being reported by Squadron Leader Burke.



No blues here: George Melly after receiving a special lifetime achievement award yesterday for his contribution to jazz. The 71-year-old singer was honoured during the 12th BT British Jazz Awards. The singer and writer said: 'I'm delighted, jazz was my first love – though I do feel like I'm getting the award just for being old!' Photograph: David Rose

## Software that has 'millennium bug' still on sale

By Anthony Bevins  
Political Editor

COMPUTER systems that will crash at the end of next year are still being sold by manufacturers and retailers, the banks warned yesterday.

The British Bankers' Association, which represents 300 banks from 60 countries operating in Britain, told the Commons Science and Technology Committee that banks were spending about £1bn tackling the "millennium bug".

The "bug" problem is caused by computers that have not been programmed to recognise the two-digit year 00 as 2000, but will revert to 1900. Because many programs are "buried", and because many networks are inter-dependent, any system breakdown could create unknown domino effects.

In evidence to the select committee yesterday, officials from the Health and Safety Executive said there was no major hazard risk from any of the critical areas for which they

were responsible – nuclear, chemical, offshore oil, mines and railways. But the banks appeared much more concerned about the scale of the commercial threat.

"New systems continue to be supplied by manufacturers and retailers which are non-compliant [with 2000]," the association said in written evidence. "These include some which may purport to be compliant."

"At a time when there is pressure on businesses to act, it is vital that those who choose to

replace their hardware and software are given unambiguous compliance information about what they are buying as replacements."

It then called on the Government to make it illegal to sell computer equipment that could not cope with the date-change, saying: "The imminence of year 2000 means that non-compliant systems supplied now ought to be declared unfit for their purpose under the law."

The association also said it was concerned that some small-

er software houses, which did not have the staff to cope with remedial work, would simply choose to go out of business rather than face legal liability.

As for contingency plans, the banks hinted that they could be left with a pen-and-paper failsafe – which "could be a huge operation". They warned: "If the problem is not solved in the core national payment systems, it would mean that the vast majority of salaries, pensions and other direct debits/standing orders would not be paid."

At current levels of business, inter-bank payments systems dealt with the equivalent of a year's national product every six days, and any payments breakdown could trigger a chain reaction of business failures.

Their memorandum said: "Banks are co-operating to ensure business customers are taking the necessary action because they recognise that the failure of one bank's customer could disrupt or bring down the customers of other banks, leading to losses for all."

## Nuclear subs may end up on land

BRITAIN'S old nuclear submarines may be cut up and brought ashore because the Government no longer has any credible long term plans for burying highly radioactive material deep underground, writes Nicholas Schoon.

George Robertson, Secretary of State for Defence, announced yesterday that the Ministry of Defence is considering abandoning the medium-term strategy of keeping the decommissioned submarines afloat in Royal Navy dockyards.

There are already 11 of them at Devonport, Plymouth, and Rosyth near Edinburgh, including the old Polaris intercontinental missile vessels. With 15 nuclear submarines now in service, the number of out-of-action radioactive hulks is set to increase over the years, and the two docks will run out of space.

When nuclear-powered submarines are taken out of service, the radioactive fuel rods are taken out of their reactors, which are then taken to British Nuclear Fuel's plant at Sellafield, Cumbria, for long-term storage.

But parts of the submarines are still radioactive, although next to no radiation escapes into the outside world. The MoD says they can be kept afloat indefinitely without any risk provided they are regularly inspected and maintained.

Now it is considering interim land storage, which would involve cutting out the entire reactor compartment and storing it ashore in a guarded site.

The reactor compartments would take up less space than the submarines and there would be no leakage of radioactivity. The rest of the vessel would be cut up for scrap. Alternatively, the MoD might find other locations to keep them afloat.

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# Retreat by Irvine over legal-aid cutbacks

By Jason Bennett

THE LORD Chancellor has retreated on plans to withdraw legal aid from almost all civil cases but announced yesterday that most disputes involving personal injuries are to be replaced with "no win, no fee" arrangements in court.

Lord Irvine unveiled proposals to cut the £1.4bn legal aid budget by £100m a year. However, he has postponed a controversial plan to remove financial aid for medical negligence claims.

The initiatives are aimed at reducing the expanding legal aid bill, while giving people on modest incomes who cannot afford to pay for private action, a way of bringing cases to court.

Lawyers yesterday attacked the plans to remove legal aid from most personal injury cases - such as those arising from car accidents - arguing that solicitors may refuse to take up complex cases in the future because of fears that they could lose huge sums of money.

Under the "conditional fee" system lawyers get nothing if they lose a case, but can charge up to double the fees if they win.

In the proposals, contained in the consultation paper, "Access to Justice with Conditional Fees", the Lord Chancellor intends to replace legal aid with "no win, no fee" in a number of areas by summer. As well as car accident cases, they also include industrial injury or illness cases, arguments over wills, boundary and business disputes. But cases that can be shown to have a public interest because of the implications for other victims may still get taxpayers' support.

Conditional fees were made optional for personal injury

cases in 1995. So far, the Government said, more than 34,000 cases have been brought.

In October, Lord Irvine said he wanted to "exclude most claims for money or damages from legal aid" by April, but lobbying from lawyers and consumer groups appears to have changed his mind.

The consultation document says that medical negligence cases will continue to be eligible for legal aid, at least for the next two or three years, after which the Lord Chancellor is said to want it replaced by a "no win, no fee" arrangement.

Legal aid will still be available for family and criminal cases, judicial reviews, problems involving housing, and people defending claims against them for money or damages.

Yesterday's paper said civil and family legal aid had been rising at an "unacceptable rate", tripling over seven years to £671m, while the number of people helped has fallen.

The Law Society, which represents solicitors, strongly criticised the plans to replace legal aid for personal injury cases. A spokesman said: "There are many people who will fall through the net. Not all personal injury cases are straightforward and lawyers may be reluctant to take on complex ones, or where the damages claimed are very high."

The Bar Council, representing barristers, welcomed the decision to postpone the withdrawal of legal aid from many cases, but criticised ending it for personal injury cases.

"To force people who have had accidents at work, or on the road, to fund their claims by 'no win, no fee' is illogical, unfair and premature," said chairman Heather Hallett QC.



Romantic look: A model wearing a hand-printed gown with matching wrap from Dolce & Gabbana's (right) autumn/winter collection in Milan yesterday. Photographs: AP



## Dolce e Gabbana put traditional seal on Milan collection

By Tamzin Blanchard  
in Milan

ITALIAN designers flew the flag at Milan Fashion Week yesterday. Dolce & Gabbana's floral collection for autumn/winter '98 was inspired by a walk through a Mediterranean garden, making use of some of the country's traditional handicrafts, including hand-painted fabrics from Como, local embroidery techniques and Sicilian fringed scarves.

At a press conference earlier in the week, Stefano Gabbana took half an hour out of his pre-show schedule to talk to the media through a small preview of the new collection. "Each shawl takes a week to make," he assured us.

The clothes are mostly one-off pieces, hand-painted with yellow mimosa sprays, hydrangeas and garden insects. Bumble bees buzz around the skirt and a diamond dragonfly flies on the strap of a pair of shoes. "This is craftsmanship you can only get in Italy," said Mr Gabbana.

The collection was as sexy as we have come to expect from one of Italy's most famous fashion exports, with bras built into bustier dresses and painted stretch net

dresses worn over shiny silver rubber underskirts.

It is not often you get to ask a designer about the washing instructions for their garments, but these clothes look so fragile and delicate that the question seemed necessary. Yes, the pieces can be dried-cleaned. And even better, the gold plastic brocade, one of the collection's new additions, can be wiped clean. Prices range between £1,250 and £6,000 but the shawls in particular, are like heirlooms to be passed from generation to generation. Although still ready-to-wear, this is the closest Dolce & Gabbana get to haute couture. Madonna, the designers' friend who they have dressed for her latest album, will no doubt order heavily from the collection.

Earlier in the day, the Moschino collection was upbeat and assured, with hand-crocheted edgings on coats, satin striped Yves Saint Laurent-inspired evening wear and the season's inevitable box pleat skirts. Since the designer's death in 1994, the label has continued to produce humorous clothes with slogans and logos like "if you can't be elegant, at least be extravagant." The message yesterday was "create your own destiny."

## Campus ire at tuition fee plan

Student leaders claimed to have staged the largest campus protest in history yesterday as an estimated 2 million people boycotted lectures in protest at university tuition fees, writes Ben Russell.

The National Union of Students said the walk-out far exceeded expectations. Means-tested tuition fees of £1,000 a year will be charged from October and student grants will be replaced with government-backed loans. The action came two days after the Bill to impose tuition fees suffered two defeats in the Lords. Peers voted through an amendment to restore student grants. David Blunkett, Education Secretary, has pledged to overturn the amendments. Student leaders have blamed the decision to introduce fees for a fall in the number of university applications this year.

## Fraud-charge man to return to UK

AN AUSTRALIAN man yesterday lost his battle against extradition to Britain where he is wanted for a £2m fraud involving diet tea.

Peter Foxler, a former lover of ex-Page Three model Samantha Fox, was ordered by judges in Brisbane to face five counts of fraud brought against him by British police in April.

He has been jailed in several countries for producing phoney diet teas and pills. After the hearing Mr Foxler produced a written statement saying: "It's like Gallipoli all over again. The British give the orders and we follow them without considering the real risk to life and limb."

## Sixth-form grants

Sixth formers from deprived backgrounds should be entitled to "modest" financial help of about £500 pounds a year to pay their way through school or college, a senior government advisor said.

A package of measures was also being considered to help teenagers with transport to lessons, Graham Lane told MPs.

## A newt idea

The rare palmate newt and nightingales in Kent will be among beneficiaries of £7.83m for Wildlife Trusts announced at the Heritage Lottery Fund's special environment seminar in London, writes Stephen Goodwin. Lord Rothschild, fund chairman, said protecting land was one of the most attractive ideas emerging from the debate on spending lottery funds.

Offer runs from 5.3.98 to 15.3.98 inclusive.

Prices correct at time of going to press. Normal can price £1.25. Available to over 18s only. Offer subject to availability. No further discounts apply including shareholder's discount. Offer applies to special Centenary pack only.

## Giant theme park to create 6,500 jobs

PLANS for Britain's biggest theme park were unveiled today - with the promise of 6,500 new jobs.

Developers want to give millions of visitors the 21st century's best "white knuckle" rides in the £500 million park planned for 800 acres of farmland near the M4 in south Wales. It would also be the world's first all-weather theme park, with much of it covered by a huge hi-tech membrane.

A Bristol-based consortium, Legend Court Ltd, revealed their plan at a golf club near the proposed site at Magor, just a minute's drive from the new Severn bridge.

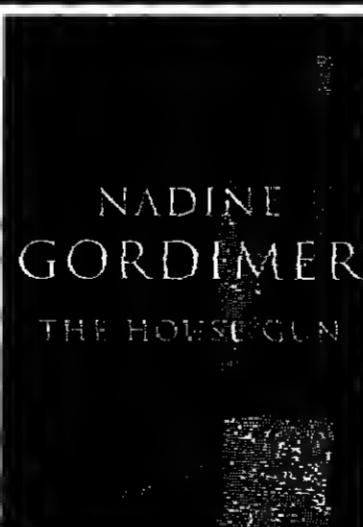
A detailed planning application will be submitted to Newport and Monmouthshire County Borough Councils next month. If approved, the park would open in summer 2001 for an estimated 2.7 million visitors a year.

Councillors are concerned about the impact of such a

huge development on nearby villages. But the developers promised it would be "environmentally friendly", and said there would be full consultation.

A public inquiry on the massive scheme is expected, possibly next year, with the final decision being taken by Welsh Secretary Ron Davies.

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# China's new PM takes an axe to mandarins

By Teresa Poole in Peking

CHINA'S annual parliament opens today to appoint the country's first new prime minister in 10 years.

Zhu Rongji, the top economic policy-maker, will take over the job with a mandate to impose the most sweeping structural reorganisation of China's over-manned and inefficient government bureaucracies since Deng Xiaoping launched the country on the path of reform two decades ago.

The Zhu blueprint includes abolishing up to a dozen ministries, a clear-out of many senior ministry officials, and large-scale lay-offs among the bloated ranks of civil servants. "Mr Zhu is putting his reputation on the line from the word go," said one Western diplomat.

"He wants a more powerful and effective government to

come out of this. It is quite a daring thing to do."

Mr Zhu, 69, has already made enemies in his current job as first deputy prime minister in charge of the economy. His austerity measures since 1993 successfully brought down inflation and curbed excessive spending by free-wheeling provinces, but also targeted corruption and the interests of local cadres.

Mr Zhu is widely viewed by Western diplomats as the most able Chinese leader and the best-qualified for prime minister, although not a political reformer. But his restructuring is set to be imposed just as the country is facing a new raft of economic problems.

Growth is slowing, unemployment is soaring, foreign investment is falling, and exports are suffering because of competition from neighbouring Asian countries whose currencies have collapsed. Mr Zhu must also sort out China's shaky domestic state banking system which, it was announced at the weekend, is to receive a capital injection of \$32.5 billion as financial bailing against an estimated \$200 billion in non-performing loans to the country's loss-making state-owned enterprises.

This month's 15-day National People's Congress (NPC) will formalise the "triumvirate" which now runs China and which must negotiate solutions to all these problems.

President Jiang Zemin, 71, who is also party chief and head of the armed forces, will retain his position as "primum inter pares".

Mr Zhu will replace Li Peng, 69, who must step down after two full terms. But Mr Li will keep his ranking as the second most powerful man in the po-

litical hierarchy, and is expected to take over as chairman of the NPC, ousting Qiao Shi, the party elder who was dumped in a power struggle with Mr Jiang at the party congress.

The appointment of Mr Li as NPC head is the most controversial because of his role in implementing the brutal crackdown on the Tienanmen Square protesters in June 1989.

It remains to be seen how the relative power of the three men will evolve in a closed political system normally riven by factional rivalries. The elevation of the able Mr Zhu to prime minister is an obvious threat to the power of Mr Jiang and Mr Li.

"If Zhu is too successful, then he clearly becomes a very big man indeed in China," said the Western diplomat.

"It is going to be difficult for Mr Li to retain his Number 2 position."



Invite: Hong Kong Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa in Peking for the opening ceremony of the 9th People's Congress

## The revolution that leaves the people behind

Teresa Poole finds Tianjin's desperate workers searching the streets for survival

"PEOPLE at our age, we can't find jobs. We're finished. Even as servants they want younger ones," said Huang Li, her haggard face whitened with powder and her lips painted red. "I'm 37."

At the municipal job centre in Tianjin city, 75 miles east of Peking, the human casualties of China's new industrial revolution queue up in search of a better future.

"In my family, among my brothers and sisters and our wives and husbands, we seven have all lost our jobs. We are in our late forties. What can we do?" said one man, dismissed by a chemicals factory. "Don't listen to the talk of the leaders, they are corrupt. I was a soldier in the past, but what do I get from the government now?"

Unemployment in China is reaching crisis levels, and much worse is yet to come. As the country's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), opens its annual meeting today official delegates from around the country are demanding help in coping with the legions of redundant workers back in their home cities, laid-off by loss-making state factories which are no longer being bailed out by government funds.

The question is whether the Communist party can keep the lid on rising social pressures in the city, where people used to be guaranteed work under the centrally planned economy. All that has changed with the reform of state owned enterprises. But the demand is overwhelming.

Some 12 million urban state workers have already been made redundant, and according to the government-controlled All-China Federation of Trade Unions, another 8-10 million will lose their jobs by 2000. Under the restructuring of government ministries to be announced today at the NPC, about 4 million civil servants will also be laid off. This adds up to a quarter of China's urban workforce.

In the ailing industrial city of Tianjin, one in seven industrial workers have already lost their jobs, or "xia gang" (stepped down from one's post) in the new idiom. Their only safety net is being allowed to keep their virtually-free housing.

After 5pm, when hawkers are allowed on the main shopping streets, the jobless of Tian-

jin spill out onto the pavements, laying out their meagre goods to sell. These people are often deemed in official statistics as having found re-employment.

One 37-year-old woman was offering cheap tweezers, eye pencils and face sponges after losing her job with a fridge factory. "I sell about 10 yuan (75p) worth a night, from which I get a few yuan profit. Doing this is my only choice."

Next to her stood a 45-year-old woman selling toffee rice cakes which she had made at home, and her husband with a candy-floss machine on the back of his bicycle. They both lost their jobs at Tianjin's Number 1 Textile Factory last year. "At first I stayed at home for several months," she said. "Then a relative gave me this idea. I work during the day to make the cakes, and stay here until mid-

.....  
What can we do?  
Don't listen to  
the talk of the leaders,  
they are corrupt'

night to sell as many as possible." All the profits go towards paying their child's school fees, the couple said. Like most redundant workers, they received no unemployment benefit.

The Tianjin government expects another 100,000 to join the jobless queues this year, and is making an effort to organise job fairs and retraining opportunities. But the demand is overwhelming.

Outside the job centre that day, a crowd had started to gather long before the doors opened at 9am. Around 15,000 people turn up here each week, said Zhao Dingcheng, vice-director of the centre; this is the city's biggest job centre, but it has another 152 smaller ones.

Ms Huang stood with her middle-aged friend by a company advertising for computer programmers and printing machine operators. "I have no skills. I can only do some hard labour work. I lost my job at the state flour depot just over a year ago," said Ms Huang. She receives £3.50 a month from her old state danwei (work unit) in unemployment money.

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Fame in the frame: Senator Ted Kennedy, Mikhail Gorbachev and Sophia Loren were at Time magazine's 75th anniversary gala at New York's Radio City Music Hall. All three have featured on the cover. Photograph: AP

## Gulf state's British torture chief moved

By Robert Fisk  
Middle East Correspondent



Out of Africa: Henderson at the time of the Mau Mau

**OFFICIALLY**, Ian Henderson has lost his job. According to the Bahrainis, the former British Special Branch officer and "hero" of the Mau Mau war in Kenya has been replaced as head of the island's Special Intelligence Service by Sheikh Khaled bin-Mohamed bin-Salman al-Khalifa, a member of the emir's ruling family. But opposition groups, whose members have suffered torture in the cells of Mr Henderson's SIS headquarters in Bahrain, have their doubts about the announcement.

For almost 10 years, Bahraini dissidents, especially Shia opposition members demanding a return to parliamentary rule, have claimed Mr Henderson, a Scot largely credited with breaking the Mau Mau's intelligence service, has been in charge of the island's torture chambers. Their allegation is true. His interpreter - after three decades in Bahrain he cannot speak Arabic - is a Jordanian army officer who has personally

whipped interrogation victims.

The New York-based Human Rights Watch has reported that the toe-nails of prisoners have been torn out. Electricity has also been used on Shia protesters brought to Mr Henderson's offices, although witnesses say the Briton has himself never inflicted torture.

In Britain, Bahraini opponents of the regime have been demanding Mr Henderson be

brought to trial in London for rights abuses, a call supported by a number of Labour MPs.

British foreign secretaries have disclaimed any responsibility for his activities - Mr Henderson's victims have sometimes been deported to London and forbidden from returning to their country of birth, even though they hold full Bahraini passports.

There are rumours in Bahrain that Mr Henderson has cancer and has been given a golden handshake by the al-Khalifa family to buy property for his retirement in the US.

But Bahraini opposition leaders' still wonder if the announcement is true. Asking for anonymity, one Bahraini critic said yesterday that even if Mr Henderson has been fired from his job as SIS head, he may still hold a position within the al-Khalifa's personal security service.

"We are told he is being replaced by Khaled Mohamed - but the sheikh is not an intelligence man, just a traffic official," the Bahraini said.

Mansour al-Jamri, a spokesman for the "Bahrain Freedom Movement" in London, said it made little difference whether Mr Henderson or Sheikh Khaled ran the security services so long as Bahrainis continued to be imprisoned and tortured. "If we see the number of... victims decrease... that will be a positive sign."

Mansour al-Jamri's father, Sheikh Abdul-Amir al-Jamri, has been in jail on the island since January of 1996. Violent protests have decreased in recent months - a reason perhaps, for Mr Henderson's departure from the SIS.

## EU envoy to restore Mossad's tarnished image

By Patrick Cockburn  
in Jerusalem

**IN AN** attempt to restore the image of Mossad as an effective foreign intelligence organisation, the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, yesterday appointed Efraim Halevy, a diplomat and former intelligence official, as its head.

A failed assassination attempt in Jordan and a botched wire-tapping led Danny Yatom, the previous head of Mossad, to resign last week.

The reputation of Mossad, previously known for its effectiveness, was also damaged by the discovery that Yehuda Gil, one of its agents, had for years fabricated a source in the Syrian government and was pocketing money paid to him.

Mr Halevy is Israel's ambassador to the European Union and a former deputy head of the organisation.

He will have as his own deputy, General Amiram Levine, currently head of Israel's northern command,

which is fighting a low-level campaign against Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon. Part of his brief will be to groom General Levine as the next head of Mossad.

A motive for appointing Mr Halevy is that he has close ties with Jordan. Jordan was angered by the attempt last year by Mossad agents to assassinate Khalid Meshal, a leader of Hamas, the Islamic militant organisation, with poison gas outside his office in Amman, the Jordanian capital.

King Hussein is believed to have considered storming the Israeli embassy in Amman if the antidote had not been produced by Israel. Despite the Meshal affair, Jordan has little alternative but to rely on Israel in case of a confrontation with Iraq.

President Ezer Weizman has been re-elected for a second five-year term by the Knesset, the Israeli parliament. He defeated Shaul Amor, who stood as the representative of Jews who came originally from the Middle East, by 63 votes to 49.

## Ortega sex abuse claims leave Nicaraguans reeling

By Phil Davison  
Latin America Correspondent



Daniel Ortega: Did not deny stepdaughter's claims

**HE WAS** a geekish, horn-rimmed version of Che Guevara, a young revolutionary in red-and-black silk bandana who won the hearts of a generation. As leader of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), Daniel Ortega helped overthrow the Nicaraguan dictator, Anastasio Somoza, in 1979 before marching in triumph into the capital, Managua.

Now, Nicaraguans are reeling from allegations that, from around the time of the revolution, comandante Ortega, who is still leader of the Sandinista party, sexually abused his then 11-year-old stepdaughter.

In one of the biggest news stories to hit the country since the revolution, the girl, Zofia Ortega, 30, went public this week with something that had been rumoured in

and uncertainties in me from the time I was a little girl and affected the emotional development of my childhood and adolescence," she said in a letter to the media.

Nicaraguans listened in stunned silence as it was carried repeatedly on radio and television stations. "To overcome the effects of this prolonged aggression, with all the harassment, threats, pressures and blackmail that came with it, has not been easy."

Mr Ortega and his longtime partner, Rosario Murillo, the girl's mother, later appeared in front of news media to make brief statements. His eyes red, the Sandinista leader, now in opposition, did not deny the allegation, saying only that "it causes us pain and sadness". Rosario Murillo, a leading poet and former revolutionary, did deny it, however, saying the accusation was "a total falsehood".

"We are shocked, we are wounded, we are hurt," Ms Murillo added, standing beside Mr Ortega. "This is a man of irreproachable moral quality. Why would she want to destroy this symbol of values and commitment? We have no rancour or resentment, we want to respond only with love. We want to keep this a family matter."

Zofia Ortega said she was dropping the name Ortega "for ethical reasons" and would use her biological father's surname, Narvaez. Jorge Narvaez, long dead, was married to Ms Murillo when they were teenagers.

Nicaraguans debated whether the allegations, or at least their timing, were part of a political conspiracy.

Mr Ortega's leadership of the Sandinista party is in question and his stepdaughter, also a Sandinista, is vice-president of a committee charged with reforming the party.

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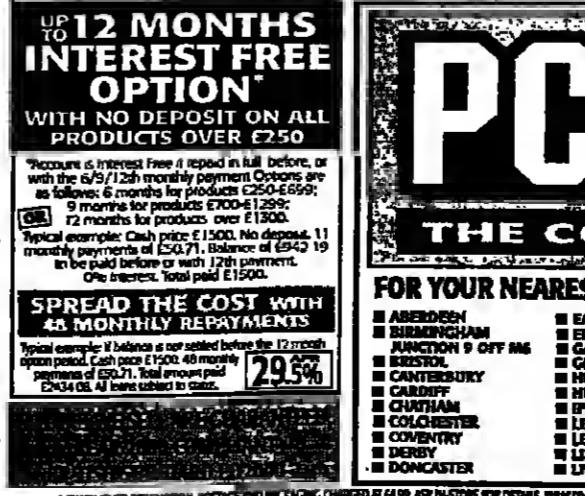


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THE INDEPENDENT 13/FOREIGN

# Inside Baghdad's 'ward of death'

**Exclusive:** Hundreds of cancer-stricken children are dying for lack of drugs to treat their disease. Robert Fisk reports

DR ALI ISMAIL sat in his office, staring in front of him. "When Faisel Abbas died two days ago, I came here, closed the door, sat down and cried," he said. "I gave drugs to him from my own hands. He was like a brother to me. He was only 10 years old. He was diagnosed with leukaemia three years ago and we treated him with drugs; he received treatment, but it was only partial because we lack so many drugs."

He blamed the sanctions, of course, for blocking the medicines; and he blamed the 1991 war for turning his paediatric cancer ward into a way-station for dying children, for the infants who – given their first medicines – bleed to death in front of the doctors. There isn't a medical worker at the al-Mansur who doesn't believe that the West's arsenal in the 1991 Gulf war did not poison the land in which these children tried to grow up. "In three years, I have seen hundreds of children with leukaemia and last year there was a dramatic increase," Dr Ismail said. "This month, we diagnosed 20 new cases, mostly from the south – from Basra, Nassariyah, Kerbala and Najaf. It's mainly caused by radiation."

The doctors at the al-Mansur hospital in Baghdad have an odd way of expressing themselves, a scientific-emotional grammar. "We have palliative treatment but not curative treatment," the doctor explained to me, sighing all the while and still staring at the window.

When you walk into the child cancer ward across the hall, you understand why. Little Samar Khair lies in what the doctors quite casually call the "ward of death". She is only five years old but looks much younger, lying shivering on her bed, her eyes squeezed shut with pain, her large, unwieldy father – massive in his grey *gallibah* robe amid such frailty and pain – gently placing a damp yellow compress on her face. She comes from al-Yusifia on the road to Babylon, the target of regular Allied raids in February 1991.

Samar's father, Jaber, looks poor because he is. He spent 15,000 dinars to buy cyto-toxins for his dying daughter – about £6, but more than three months wages for Jaber. "I sold my car to buy the medicine for her," he told us quietly. And how would he pay for the next dose, we asked? "I will borrow the money."



Five-year-old leukaemia victim Samar Khair: Her father spent £6, which is equal to three months wages, on cyto-toxins for his dying daughter. Photograph: Robert Fisk

Dr Ismail, who is resident doctor in the cancer ward, listened in silence. Then he said to us, in English: "I've seen these patients' families so many times. They sell everything in their house, even their beds – and then their child dies anyway."

You cannot move through Baghdad's "ward of death" without two emotions – a deep sense of unease, even shame, that "our" 1991 military victory over the cruel Saddam may well have created this purgatory of the innocent by poisoning both the air they breathe and the land they try to grow up in; and a profound admiration for the dignity of the poor Iraqis who sometimes sell their own clothes in a vain effort to save the children who die in their arms...

Nor can one remain unaffected by the bravery of these tiny victims. Ali Hillal is eight years old but looks about four, a weird fringe of hair across the top of his forehead accentuating his baldness. "Yesterday, he had a very severe headache," Dr Ismail said, smiling at the child. "He was screaming. When I gave him an injection between his vertebrae, he told me he knew the pain of the needle, but that he would be very quiet because he knows I want what is best for him."

Ali Hillal was malnourished when he was brought here from the town of Diala, east of Baghdad, his home next to a broadcasting transmitter and several factories that were heavily and repeatedly bombed by Allied

aircraft in February, 1991. He is the fifth child of a family that has no history of cancer. "First he had the mumps, then he had swelling in his chest and abdomen," Dr Ismail said. "Now the tumour has reached his brain. When the condition reaches this point, the prognosis is very poor."

Ali's mother Fatima remembers the bombing. "There was a strange smell, a burning, choking smell, something like insecticide," she said. And I wondered, listening to her, about those bombs. Was she smelling nitrite, which the doctors blame for some of the leukaemias? Or had "we" bombed one of Saddam's chemical warfare plants?

Latif Abdul Sattar was playing

with a small car when I caught sight of him. His smile, beneath the dome of his baldness, suggested life. Diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma three months ago, he has received two cycles of cyto-toxins. "But the third cycle is partial because he's getting only cyclophosphamide adriamycin as a substitute for vinorelbine," Dr Ismail said. What Latif needs is produced by a company in Germany called Astra Medica. "We received 20 vials of this 10 days ago – before that, the patients' families were buying it for 160,000 dinars [more than two years' salary for many Iraqis]. But still we can't get enough. Latif needs the treatment as long as his malignancy continues."

Dr Ismail continued his rounds,

Youssef Abdul Raouf Mohamed from Kerbala – close to military bases bombed in 1991 – has gastrointestinal bleeding. He still has his curly hair and can talk to his parents but has small blood spots in his cheeks, a sure sign of internal bleeding. And Dr Ismail is bothered by a memory. "Since the UN embargo, patients often die before they can receive induction treatment," he says. "They get thrombocytopenia, a severe reduction of blood platelets. They start bleeding everywhere. We had another child like Youssef. He was called Ahmed Fleah. And after we started the cyto-toxin treatment, he started bleeding from his mouth, eyes, ears, nose, and rectum. He bled to death in two weeks."

Epidemic that came in wake of the war

By Robert Fisk  
in Baghdad

IT STARTED with a chance conversation with Murtaza Saleh. She was wearing a turban and had cancer. "God knows, maybe the cause is whatever they bombed us with," she said. But Murtaza smoked cigarettes. Her story seemed as normal as it was tragic.

But then it turned out that her husband, a medical doctor, had died of prostate cancer, and three other family members had also died of cancer, some with no history of the disease at all.

I began to ask other Iraqis if they knew of cancer in their family or those of their friends. An Iraqi civil servant was chatting to me in Baghdad one afternoon. "My neighbour's baby is sick," he said. "Her name is Noor Mohamed Younis. She is only two-and-a-half years old. My neighbour said he knew something was wrong when he saw a sort of shining, glimmering in her eye". The baby had the eye removed – and they will remove the other eye in a few months' time. The doctors said if they didn't do that, the cancer would move to her brain and kill her within a year. The doctors said it was because of the war."

Then in Basra, in the poorest part of town, we asked a group of women about the health of their families. "My husband has cancer," one of them said. Sundus Abdel-Kader, a 32-year-old mother of four, said her aunt had just died of cancer. Two other women interrupted to say they had young sisters suffering from cancer. And so it went on in a society where merely to admit to cancer in the family is regarded as a social stigma. We went to the hospitals. And so the story materialised. Why had so many young Iraqis – especially children – suddenly fallen victim to an explosion of leukaemia in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War?

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STYLICIDE

Epidemic  
that came  
in wake of  
the war

# Sheffield: it's the vision thing

The post-industrial home of 'The Full Monty' is carving out a new urban landscape, with a series of bold developments.

By Nonie Niesewand

**CALL ME** an old fashioned modernist but my heart leapt at the brave new world unveiled in the opening shots of Sheffield in *The Full Monty*. Big steel blast furnaces glowing white hot. A symphony of chimney stacks and big bellied buildings staggered against a blue sky. A shopping centre dripping with flowers, real ones, even if they are brass animals.

This little bit of archive film, shot in 16mm in the early Seventies by James Coulthard, puts a good spin on a modern city. It was shown in Sweden and other steel-producing countries to encourage investment and tourism.

It is used in the film about out-of-work steelmen, which has turned out to be the most successful British film ever is, of course, deeply ironic. Sixty thousand jobs have been lost in the steel industry alone since the city's industrial heyday.

Now the fifth largest city in Britain, famous for having its name on a knife blade, is at the cutting edge of design again. But this time it will be nothing to do with manufacturing and everything to do with leisure, the industry of our age. Among the most important of these in a city which was home to the Human League and the two Cockers, Jarvis and Joe, is the National Centre for Popular Music, which its architect, Nigel Coates, refers to as "a jukebox of pop culture".

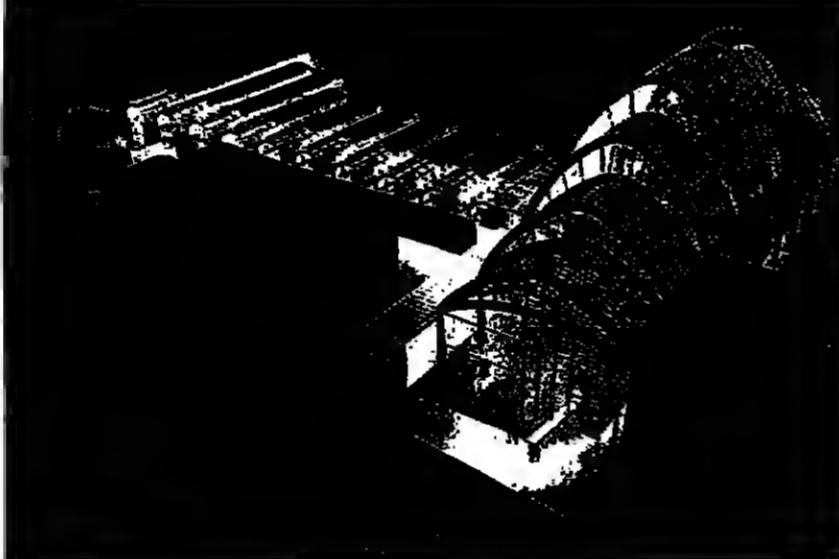
The £15 million lottery-funded project, designed with Doug Branson and with acoustics by Philips, will open in January 1999. Four stainless steel drums are themed to tell the story of pop and the technology of making music, with a shop, a cafe and an exhibition space linked by a glazed ground level in the core. Above each drum, a cow rotates in the wind to ventilate them and reinforce the jukebox feeling. "The galleries are all ears, eyes and hands-on space. We want the building to reflect this, but at the same time to catch the spirit of Sheffield's industrial landscape," says Coates.

A few minutes' walk away is the site of the proposed Winter Garden and Millennium Gallery, a £120m heart-of-the-city project financed by a £20.5m grant from the Millennium Commission, with money from the EU, English Partnerships, the Government's Single Regeneration Budget, Sheffield Hallam University and the private sector. The city council will provide the site of its unlived "egg box", as the town hall extension is known. Designed by Pringle, Richards Sharratt on a masterplan by Terry Farrell, designer of the MI6 building in London, the complex includes an hotel, new council offices and three public squares.

If it is granted planning permission, it will amount to the biggest urban regeneration programme this century. Counting against it is the fact that Sheffield already has two well known galleries - the Mappin and the Graves - that don't attract enough visitors.

Sheffield silversmith and steel designer and manufacturer, David Mellor, doesn't see the point of the new gallery. "One and half miles away in the Sheffield botanical gardens there is the most marvellous glass house by Paxton, who built the Crystal Palace. It's been left in appalling decay and now has got lottery money to restore it. So why build a rather more second-rate gallery so close?"

Destination Sheffield, the non-profit-



The 'four drums' of the National Centre for Popular Music (above), designed by Nigel Coates. The Millennium Gallery and Winter Garden (left), by Pringle Richards Sharratt; the Interactive Football World development at Meadowhall

Main picture: Nigel Coates



making organisation designed to raise the city's profile, defends the new complex by stressing the Continental-style piazzas set about with sculpture. In the adjoining indoor garden you will step inside the temperate zones of Australia, South America and the Mediterranean. The winter garden, designed to cut the chilly blast of the wind off the Pennines, will be a temperate zone glass house for eucalyptus, wattle, savannah grasses, and mimosa. It'll be open from 6pm till midnight and opens into the Millennium Gallery, lit by a vaulted roof.

Now even sport moves out of real time to become as easy as strapping on a virtual reality helmet for a game of football. Football World is planned as a major interactive centre at Meadowhall to reflect Sheffield's pivotal role in the history of the national game. The oldest club in the world is Sheffield FC, founded in 1857, and the world's oldest ground at Sandygate is still home to Hallam FC, Sheffield's local rivals. Football World is working closely with the special policy adviser of the Secretary of State for Education - one

of Sheffield's own MPs, David Blunkett - to bring educational aspects of football into the project. A building will be developed in association with Meadowhall to house the exhibitions, a new sports, leisure, retail and catering outlet. All-weather football pitches will be built in association with Football World Trust.

Every town that ever reinvented itself from an industrial base to a service-based economy has opted for two panaceas for recession - shopping and sport. Across the city, there are signs everywhere of the late

20th-century leisure city which Sheffield has become: the clubs, pubs and restaurants, the dry ski slopes, before moving on to Olympic-sized indoor pools, football arenas and sports centres. The escalators of the Meadowhall shopping centre carry more than 30 million visitors a year. In Europe's largest food court, McDonald's, you can buy any food from Japanese to Tex Mex.

Now Sheffield is "an up and going place," as Coulthard called it. He wants to shoot some new footage for a new tourist video, made by Destination

Sheffield. He could start filming at the Players' Café, an old stone schoolhouse, which projects live sporting events and pop concerts on a two-storey screen as its customers eat. It was there that the video of *The Full Monty* was launched last Monday.

And if the scale and size of these awesome post-modern buildings troubles you, why not take the *Full Monty* each tour of the unexotic locations featured in the film, from the canal to the working men's clubs, on offer this month at the British Travel Trade Fair?

## Time for millennium man to hang up his chequebook

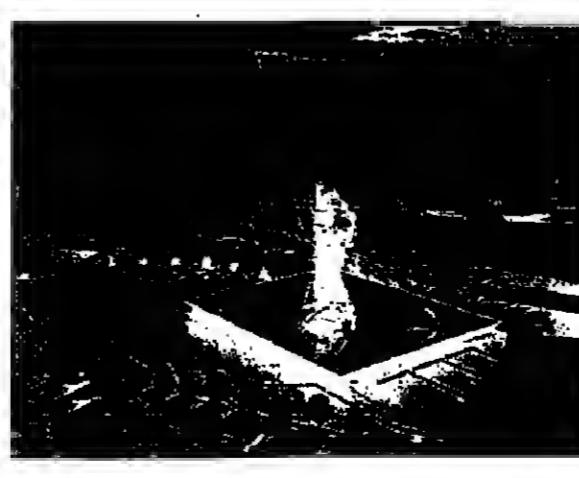
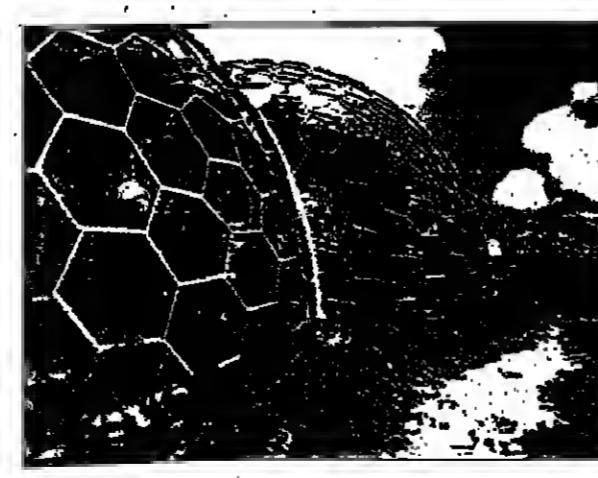
Eric Sorensen was responsible for deciding which projects got to share in the lottery millions. Then he became surplus to requirements

**ERIC SORENSEN**, the man who handed out £1.25bn of lottery money to build a new Britain in time for the year 2000, is out of work. One minute he was writing cheques for millions. The next, the only big numbers in front of him are on the lottery tickets he still optimistically buys. He has left the Millennium Commission exactly a year after he took on the job. Now that nearly all the money for the Millennium projects has been allocated, his chairman, the Secretary of State for Culture, Chris Smith, says it doesn't need the services of a £120,000 chief executive any more. Sorensen agrees. It's been an amicable divorce. In truth, he

found the job less hands-on and more rubber-stamping than he'd liked.

With his love of building bridges, of London, motorways, and modern architecture (so long as it isn't a windswept concrete block), he had a vision about improving the environment. Urban regeneration is one of his enthusiasms - not just big projects such as turning inner-city squares into plazas, or Millennium Commission Landmark projects such as transforming clay pits into the Eden Project landscape gardens and collieries into the solar glazed Earth Centre, but little things which make a difference.

When it comes to lottery-funded architecture, Sorensen



The Eden Project in St Austell, Cornwall, (far left) a series of biospheres designed to explore the relationship between humans and plants, which is getting £37m from the Millennium Commission. The National Space and Science Centre in Leicester (right), beneficiary of a £23.5m grant

Photographs: Millennium Commission

likes "amiable cheeriness". Bandstands, village halls, forest discovery centres, rural churches, drinking fountains, all pitching for lottery money, got funding if the applicants could prove they had the site, planning committee skills, sponsors, maintenance plans, and an excellent management team. "One of my favourites is a little wooden shelter for schoolchildren to learn about birds on

reclaimed poisoned land at Dagenham," he says.

Buildings weren't judged in a beauty contest. Sorensen defends the fact that there were no architects or designers on the review board. "It's not as if we ignored it, but we didn't systematically go for design competitions." Feasibility became far more important.

At his farewell party last night, his colleagues gave him

matched funding role - half the costs of the project must be met by sponsors, EU or council funding - was a bureaucratic process which delayed construction.

"Still a couple of million to go," says Richard Bushby, raising sponsorship money for the National Space and Science Centre in Leicester. The total project will cost £46.5m, towards which they received £23.5m from the

lottery. To date he has a fully confirmed £40m. "Believe me, it's going to happen. We're nearly there." But even if they do break ground on Nick Grimshaw's building this autumn, it won't open until February 2001.

A weakness that this emphasis on designer labels, big-name architects, good contents and planning expertise highlights is that it delayed the less experienced. Deprived communities didn't even bother to pitch, and the lottery funders aren't allowed to solicit for business.

One of Sorensen's legacies to the Millennium Commission is a £70m pot of money which will be used to encourage some of Britain's ethnic communities to apply for funds to for their

own projects. "Not enough," he admits.

"The lottery is a real opportunity to improve the quality of life. We should think constantly about making substantial differences to the quality of life. Of course, homelessness, health and education are important, but the lottery money was never meant to replace taxation and government spending." As for the other criticism, that lottery funding is pushing up big buildings like mushrooms all over the country which will be difficult to fill and maintain, Sorensen says: "I don't agree. We don't spend enough on buildings."

Nonie Niesewand

# The face of power

Machiavelli is cynical bedtime reading for the powerful. David Walker wonders if he keeps Peter Mandelson awake at night

MEN are turned on by power in a very particular way, especially when the power is of the political variety. They divest themselves of the capacity to distinguish right and wrong, good and bad. This is the nub of the political doctrine known as Machiavellianism; in the service of the state, anything goes.

Historians long ago agreed that Niccolò Machiavelli, the Renaissance civil servant, was a lot more subtle (and confused) than might be suggested by a quick reading of *The Prince*, his cynical bedtime book for the powerful. But the label has stuck. "Machiavellian" entered the language, a synonym for amoral, unthinking service of power, ie spin-doctoring.

Which is why a bunch of academics at Manchester Metropolitan University who are mounting a conference on Machiavelli are playing up the New Labour angle and trying to make a connection with the roles of Peter Mandelson and Charlie Whelan. It's true that Tony Blair's summer retreat (Geoffrey Robertson's Tuscan villa) is close to Niccolò's old home in San Casciano, high in the hills south of Florence, but does the resemblance go any further?

The reason *The Prince* has survived the centuries is that it remains required reading for civil servants, junior ministers, courtiers, all those flying near the flame of power. It's full of modern-sounding aphorisms, the kind of thing you might easily imagine Peter whispering to Tony (or Charlie) bawling across an office to Gordon: "A prudent ruler cannot keep his word, when such fidelity would damage him..." "The common people are impressed by appearances" ... "It is better to be loved than feared, but better to be feared than nothing at all."

And so on. But there are good reasons why any comparison between Mandelson and Machiavelli is far-fetched – above and beyond the stern in-

junction from the Cambridge Professor of Political Science, Quentin Skinner, that you should never read political books outside the context in which they were written, especially those of the early 16th century.

For one thing, Machiavelli was not the proverbial prince of darkness. His career plans crashed when the fickle Florrentines welcomed back the Medici family and Niccolò got his P45 as well as a light touch of torture. But before then he had been a personality in his own right, as an ambassador and military strategist.

Last May Peter Mandelson made the transition from back-room boy to public figure. Conditions looked good for his emergence as a substantial politician. Instead he was given no proper job to do, or at least not one on which the public can judge his mettle. Overseeing the Dome is a non-job. For his own sake, let alone that of the Prime Minister, he should have left its management to arms' length professionals. A "Machiavellian" would surely have seen that as a way of garnering credit if the thing works and putting the blame on others if it fails.

A true Machiavellian might sometimes be moved to tell the prince some unpalatable things. "Friendships that are acquired with money and not through greatness of character prove unreliable just when they are needed," Niccolò wrote. Would Peter ever steel himself to tell Tony that some of his alliances (for example that with Murdoch) fall into this category?

It's said of Machiavelli that his true "Machiavellianism" lay in not meaning the advice he proffered in *The Prince*. The book was intended as a job application, a way of getting into the good graces of the Medicis not for the sake of personal aggrandisement but because Italy needed a strong dynasty.

A kind reading of Mandelson's career might suggest all he



Peter Mandelson and Niccolò Machiavelli: how close is the resemblance?

Photomontage: Jonathan Anstee

has sought to do has been for the greater good of socialism, at least in its New Labour guise. In this reading Mandelson (who was once thick with Neil Kinnock) takes an instrumental view of Blair. If Blair were to lose the plot, Mandelson would cast around for a substitute.

Alternatively, you can read *The Prince* for an early expression of the great maxim of poli-

tics which says socialism is what a Labour government does; in other words, never mind the big picture, let's get on with the job of governing. That phrase about socialism was, surprise surprise, coined by Peter Mandelson's granddad, Herbert Morrison, so it may have come down to him in the genes.

Niccolò was a Renaissance man whose interests ranged

from play writing to designing enfilades and glaciés for the defence of Florence. It would be hard to picture Peter in a steel helmet, but he has been known to tread the dance hall boards which one must suppose makes him a man of the world. Machiavelli could write. Mandelson's prose style – witness his pre-election book *The Blair Revolution* – is hardly classical.

There is a key chapter in *The Prince* which sometimes gets overlooked. It's about a ruler's obligations to his servants. Their loyalty, Machiavelli hints, is not unlimited. A wise ruler will see his servant all right. It's a chapter Tony Blair should study. Keeping his servant hanging on in his indeterminate and increasingly ineffective position has done neither any favours.

## Stepping out for the UN



Devine: new ambassador

WHAT do a Somali woman who had her clitoris removed with a dirty razor at the age of five and a TV personality best known for her trademark sunglasses have in common? The answer is that both the model Waris Dirie and the travel programme presenter Magenta Devine have been appointed as UN special ambassadors. They will face the cameras at the Foreign Press Association in London today as they front the launch of Face To Face, a three-year campaign by the UN Population Fund and the International Planned Parenthood Federation aimed at promoting global awareness of women's rights.

It might once have been the province of Hollywood, but bureaucracies such as the UN have taken to the cult of fame with a vengeance. Danny Kaye started it all in 1954 when he was appointed as a roving "goodwill ambassador" by Unicef. Today, all manner of celebs have been appointed. Special ambassadors chosen in recent years include Roger Moore, Ted Turner, Jane Fonda, Olivia Newton-John, Imran Khan, Bianca Jagger, footballer John Fashanu and *Dallas* actress Linda Gray.

But what can they achieve? Waris, now a Pirelli calendar girl, was appointed in October to publicise a campaign to eradicate female genital mutilation. As someone who suffered because her parents believed she had "bad things between her legs", she was an obvious choice. "I see myself as an ambassador on behalf of my sisters in Africa," she says. "I was strong enough to survive and I want to make a difference."

The choice of Devine, however, seems less obvious. She became a special ambassador two weeks ago, her name having been put forward by Population Concern, which is a partner in the Face To Face campaign in this country. According to Russell Dickson, the organ-

isation's fund-raising manager, they contacted her a couple of years ago as "a shot in the dark" and since then she has written to showbiz celebrities on the organisation's behalf.

"She's just the frontper-

son, if you like," says Dick-

son. He is unsure what she

will be doing in the months

to come. "I expect the UN

will be asking her to go out

and visit projects," he says.

Devine herself is also

somewhat mystified as to

what her future duties will in-

volve. She says she will be

signing a contract in the

near future, although she

hasn't seen it yet. "You've

got to be proactive ... It's not

just a case of using your

name."

Devine says her appoint-

ment came as an "incredible

surprise", although she de-

scribes herself as "passionate"

about women's issues

and says her travels for

BBC2's *Rough Guide* shows

have brought her face to face

with the problems facing

women in the Third World.

Possibly the main reason

for her surprise was her

comparative lack of celebri-

ty status compared to other

special ambassadors. As

Dickson puts it: "Most of

them are quite high-powered,

very well-known per-

sonalities throughout the world, so in some ways it's quite a feather in her cap."

Tim Hulse

## DILEMMAS

# My dreams of torture and abuse haunt me all day



VIRGINIA IRONSIDE

Sofia has such terrible nightmares she's frightened of going to sleep. She dreams of child abuse, tortured animals, and the images linger with her all day. What can she do?

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# THE INDEPENDENT

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## End the agony of moving house

FOR NEARLY 20 years we had a government which proclaimed its faith in free markets. It struggled, in some cases with impressive results, to apply that faith, extending competition and reducing the sphere of the state. In housing, for example, the policy of allowing tenants a right to buy their own homes extended to many hundreds of thousands of families the freedoms and benefits of home-ownership. Yet the same government was curiously impotent about the operations of markets, including those in housing and the related provision of legal and property services. It did virtually nothing to reform the obstructions and anachronisms which beset all those people – in England and Wales – seeking to sell or acquire domestic property.

Labour's ultimate position on free markets is, still, somewhat ambiguous. But to the Blair government's great credit, it seems that, before even a year is up, it intends radical change in the business of house-buying and selling. The proposals to prevent gazzumping which are now being trailed look like an excellent place to start. We hope it has the courage to challenge the vested interests in law offices and high-street estate agencies which are partly responsible for making moving house such hell for many people.

Buying a house is a special kind of purchase, and not just because of the amounts of money and debt involved. Emotions will run high, even in the best-ordered system. But tension would certainly be reduced if, after a property is found, vendor and purchaser are required to engage in a more formal commitment than word-of-mouth promises, nods or handshakes. One proposal is for a "pre-contract", involving a financial commitment both by the vendor who accepts an offer and the purchaser who makes it. Even at 1 per cent of purchase price, in many parts of England this would involve a substantial sum which no sensible person would lightly put at risk. This seems to be better than, say, emulating the Scots and basing property bargains on sealed bids. To those who argue that this would inhibit flexibility and put pressure on those in the middle of "chains", the answer has to be: hinding decisions have to be made sooner or later and to keep the exit door open as long as it is at present is an invitation to bad faith and wasted resources.

But better regulation of the relationship between vendors and purchasers entails reform in the two key housing market "professions", the law and estate agency. Here again the Conservatives were cowardly, going nowhere near enough in encouraging the growth of specialist (and cheaper) conveyancing. As for estate agents, there were too many of them on the Tory back benches for ministers to want to push them into taking responsibility for transactions, let alone proper descriptions of property, adequate surveying and so on. Labour is not so weighed down.

Under its prodding there are scores of useful ideas to be tried out, such as "log books" for property. We report today how the mortgage companies are moving, not before time, to automate (and cut the cost of) the business of valuation. Rafts of new legislation are not necessary. Good ideas would emerge if the market were more competitive, if customers were more self-confident and advisory services more effective. The Government's principal role is to hold the ring and ensure that professional bodies such as the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the Law Society do not obstruct innovation.

## Deadly legacies of war



OUR Middle East correspondent, Robert Fisk, yesterday described seeing in an oncologist's office in a Basra hospital his cancer maps of southern Iraq. Their colours are lurid. For they show what seems to be a marked recent upsurge in cases. He reported, harrowing, their human shape – the children held from chemotherapy, the patients waiting for treatment from doctors ill-supplied with equipment and medicines.

It is difficult not to infer that carcinogens released or active since the Gulf war in 1991, may be responsible for this health emergency. Where might they come from? Local sources suggest the huge refinery fires that burnt for weeks during the war may have released cancer-causing fumes. That Saddam Hussein regime had and continues to have stockpiles of chemical weapons is not in dispute – but in what circumstances might they have been released? Saddam's capacity to poison and kill the people of Iraq is attested. That Iraqis in the Basra area might have been the victims of a Saddam accident is entirely plausible. There are, after all, no Iraqi press to blow the whistle, no Iraqi opposition worth the name to publicise a cause. As for the current medical condition of those people in Basra hospitals, they are – evidently – the victims of the application to Iraq of economic sanctions, depriving the country of the wherewithal to import drugs and equipment. It would be hard to resist any bid to tighten the burden sanctions imposed on Iraq if – it is a big, big "if" – Saddam were to comply with the conditions for weapons inspections agreed with Kofi Annan last week.

But what if those southern Iraqi cancers were the unacknowledged result of the use by the Americans and their allies (including the British) of carcinogenic weapons, that is to say depleted uranium shells or even chemicals? Gulf war syndrome exists among veterans of the conflict. They have a right to know whether they were harmed by the deployment of special weapons by their own side or by some accident involving such weapons. Robert Fisk's discovery is an important piece of evidence. It needs analysis – and answer – in Baghdad, Washington and London. Some of the energy the UN investigators are putting into detecting biological and chemical weapons now could be channelled into finding out exactly how they might have been used then.

**PICTURE OF THE DAY**

It could indeed be him, but last night it probably wasn't. A homeless man and his dog in central London

Photograph: David Rose  
A 9x12 print of this photograph can be ordered on 0171-293 2534

### Blair vs town halls

DOES the Prime Minister's apparent stance on local councils ("Blair ready to ditch elected councils", 4 March) remind anyone of a previous incumbent of 10 Downing Street?

Many Labour politicians were outraged at Margaret Thatcher's abolition of the GLC and other metropolitan county councils. Much of the anger arose because it seemed that this decision was taken on the almost personal grounds of the GLC "insulting" the Government by broadcasting unemployment figures from County Hall and, even worse, subsidising bus and tube fares.

Is Mr Blair so affronted at the thought of the (mostly Labour-run) town halls not being at his beck and call that he feels the best solution is to introduce yet more quangos, a method of running things which Labour spent much of the 1980s and early 90s condemning?

If so there will be many sickened Labour supporters who will see this as another rapid step down the path from being a party of principle and local democracy to being a mere imitation of the Tories a decade ago. If this is so, where can we turn?

MICHAEL CRYAN  
Newcastle upon Tyne

WE LEARN that Tony Blair is "ready to ditch elected councils". Does this mean that he no longer wants a closer relationship with the Liberal Democrats or that he has a singularly undeveloped sense of incompatibility?

EARL RUSSELL  
House of Lords

### Countryside March

THE REAL issue highlighted by the Countryside March is not between town and country, but between small communities and farmers, and wealthy landowners and companies.

Rural employment has plummeted.

Farm work has seen a fall from 682,000 workers to 603,000 in ten years, yet CAP subsidies have risen.

Where has all the money gone, when most farmers complain of poverty? The answer is, to

permekets and multinational agricultural companies who are able to lock farmers into big purchase prices and low selling prices subsidised by the taxpayer. They guarantee this by the threat of buying inferior quality foods from other countries, often encouraging the exploitation of farmers in developing countries.

Farmers are then forced to mechanise and use vast amounts of pesticides and fertilisers in order to remain competitive.

We must be prepared to alter the CAP subsidies system in order to support small, well managed farms that preserve our countryside and provide good quality food, whilst reducing subsidies for highly mechanised farming practices. Small farmers need support from the National Farmers Union to build up co-operative farming and selling and purchasing methods that take control away from the profit-orientated companies who have no interest in the state of the countryside.

SANDY HORE-RUTHVEN  
Clovelly, Devon

MANY of the problems afflicting Britain's countryside emerged during, and were partly caused by, the previous Conservative governments.

The paucity of local transport in rural areas is a consequence of the privatisation and deregulation of public transport. The closure of village schools was started under the Conservatives, reflecting their obsession with "cost-effectiveness".

The desecration of the countryside by urban sprawl and new motorways or bypasses also derived from the Conservatives' willingness to let market forces run riot.

Why, therefore, did the "non-political" Countryside Alliance not organise marches when the Conservatives were still in office?

PETE DOREY  
Bath

### LETTERS

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk. E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

### Millennium bug

AS YOU note, the European Commission is advocating accelerated action on tackling the millennium bug (report, 27 February). This is a view with which I wholeheartedly agree and I am stepping up Europe-wide action to tackle the bug.

The Government promised to use its presidency of the EU to drive forward action on this issue. In the EU telecoms council in Brussels on 26 February, which I chaired, I announced that the UK will bold a major EU conference in May to address the problems caused by the bug. We will encourage all member states to set up national campaigns, as the UK has done with Action 2000. This will also be an excellent opportunity to share best practice and experience across the whole of the EU.

As so much business activity is international, we must do all we can at this level to ensure that our businesses are not unduly affected.

BARBARA ROCHE  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State  
Department of Trade and Industry  
London SW1

### Rantzen and hospital

DESPITE the reported findings of the Broadcasting Standards Commission, Esther Rantzen persists in making unwarranted allegations about the care of a former resident at the British Home and Hospital for Incurables which was featured so damagingly on *The Rantzen Report* in August 1996.

In your report "Rantzen sticks by her hospital story" (2 March) Ms Rantzen states that a former resident was moved to another hospital as a result of her programme. This is not true. The judicial review process that resulted in Ian being moved to a specialised assessment centre was com-

pleted before the programme was broadcast, and implied no criticism whatsoever of the care Ian received here. BH&H wants all its residents to have appropriate assessments and access to the services they need.

NOELLE KELLY  
Matron and House Governor  
The British Home and Hospital for Incurables  
London SW1

### After Fayed

I AM NOT "bouffant-haired". My hair grows like this without aid or encouragement. I have never used a hair-dryer in my life and unlike some politicians and TV presenters, I have never dyed my hair.

"Was he pushed or did he fall?", you ask ("Cole quits toughest job in PR", 21 February). Neither. I retired after 10 fascinating and fulfilling years as a member of the main board of Harrods and of its holding company, working for and with Mr Mohamed Al Fayed, an outstanding businessman and a very human, human being whom I shall always regard as a friend. It was a privilege to know him and his remarkable family.

MICHAEL COLE  
London SW7

### Supermarket waste

WE TAKE the issue of waste management extremely seriously ("Tesco store throwing away food", 19 February). We work closely with suppliers to ensure the minimum wastage whilst providing our customers with product availability. We are now conducting a trial in Manchester to give charities food near to sell-by dates and if successful will extend this to all our stores in the UK.

ANDREW COKER  
Corporate Communication Manager, Tesco  
Cheshunt, Hertfordshire

### From gay to straight

VANESSA THORPE mistakes the reaction from gay men and lesbians towards individuals who come out backwards ("Glad not to be gay", 3 March). Our feelings are usually of despair, not with the person but with what will be made of it by bigots. It is another weapon in their arsenal and they use it to try and prove that sexual orientation can be changed, that homosexuality is an illness, or a sin or a choice.

What usually happens is that individuals find themselves able to respond differently to people of the opposite sex – sometimes overnight. This may be because they have been through a personal crisis such as coming to terms with grief and loss. Another section of their sexuality has been revealed, not created!

Having already accepted a labeling system they then find it impossible to manage anything other than a gay/straight dichotomy and immediately re-label themselves as straight. It's very hard to manage ambivalent feelings and easier to accept one of them and go with it. The strength of denial about their homosexuality becomes just as strong as their previous denial about their heterosexual feelings.

TONY KONRATH  
London EC1

### Vintage

THE MENTION in Peter Sichel's Obituary (28 February) of his father, Allan Sichel, reminds me of a story told to me by that wine connoisseur the late Maurice Platnauer, Principal of Brasenose College, Oxford.

Allan Sichel often submitted himself to "blindfolded" wine tasting and was admired for his remarkable success in such tests. However on one occasion he was offered a glass of *chambé* good-quality tap water. He was obviously puzzled and declared finally: "I have never tasted this stuff before, but I know that it won't sell."

The last words are no longer true. Water does sell.  
Professor NICHOLAS KURT  
Oxford

## Sorry, the Martians ate our story about Mr Murdoch and the Patten book



MILES  
KINGTON

I DON'T often read *The Times*, but I have been making sure to get it recently for the fun of trying to spot any references to this HarperCollins business over the Chris Patten book. Finally I came across a piece on the Murdoch business in *Tuesday's Times*, in which Libby Purves adopted a testy, non-sense attitude. A now-children-getting-hats-and-coats-on-and-let's-all-go-for-a-jolly-walk-in-the-rain tone of voice, and said, Oh, come on, let's all grow up! If Murdoch doesn't want to have egg thrown at China's leaders by Chris Patten, he is perfectly entitled not to have egg flung. Almost the only thing that puzzled Ms Purves (apart from why HarperCollins had taken the risk of accepting the book in the first place) was why *Times* newspapers had not given more coverage to the whole thing. Bit odd, that. But one thing she was sure of. It wasn't on direct orders from Murdoch.

Raymond Snoddy, who seems to banalise coverage of media affairs for *The*

*Times*, said the same sort of thing when he appeared on *Medium Wave* on Radio 4 at the weekend. He was absolutely certain that Murdoch hadn't issued any instructions to any editor to avoid the story. Though he couldn't think why he hadn't given it more coverage. Nor could Peter Stothard, the editor of *The Times*. He could certainly vouch for the fact that he was not acting under pressure from Mr Murdoch. Certainly not. There was no improper pressure at all. Looking back, he felt he might have underplayed the story a bit, though he couldn't explain why...

Well, I think I can explain why. I think they were all dead scared. Sometimes it's called self-censorship, sometimes it's called over-cautiousness, but what it is basically is being dead scared. Scared for your job, scared of being hauled over the coals, scared of rocking the boat... We've all done it. We've all drawn back from the edge of some daring decision, wondering if it was worth

it and deciding it wasn't. It's the letter of complaint we never dared write, the things we never dared say to people's faces, the moments of bravery that passed in a cowardly blur of inaction, the times we have investigated a cry or stopped a fight...

I can remember doing it myself, though I'd rather mention a time when it was done to me, as I come out of this story better. When I was doing a column for *The Times*, I wrote a piece in which I decided to parody *The Sun's* style of headline-writing by going back through history and wondering how they would have greeted various famous historical events. It wasn't an original idea even then. I think I got the idea from a feature in *Punch* in which Alan Coren imagined all the papers reporting the birth of Jesus. (The only hit of that I can remember now was his excellent headline for the *Daily Worker*: "Boss's Son Inherits Earth").

Anyway, I came up with some historical headlines for *The Sun* – 1066: "Naff Off, You

Normans!". And so on. Pretty harmless stuff. So I was amazed to get a call from someone quite high up at *The Times* saying they couldn't use the piece. They couldn't be seen being rude about a sister publication.

"Why not?" I spluttered. (I'm sure I was getting at...)

"Times readers wouldn't know what you were getting at."

"Of course they would!" *Times* readers despise *The Sun*!

"Be that as it may, *Times* readers would wonder why *Times* writer was being rude about a sister publication. They would wonder what was behind it."

"But..."

I should have saved my breath. The fact was that he was scared to use the piece for the fictitious fear of offending someone. What people in that position never actually say, though, is that they are dead scared of publishing something for fear of offending the boss. You'd rather say that you

can't understand how it happened, or that aliens came down and took the item out, rather than just say you were scared...

Never mind. I have to go to London now. No, not another countryside march. This time it's a rather moving historical pageant. Yes, it's the ceremony to mark the occasion of the return of the faithful manuscript to Chris Patten. It's going to be a moving, sorrowful ritual to match the handing back of Hong Kong... The drums beating slowly, the rain falling, the muffled horses' hooves as Chris Patten walks forward with bent head to receive the ancient tattered typescript which had found a home for so long with HarperCollins... The 2,000 employees of the BBC flown out at tremendous expense to cover the handover, and to have a great time on expenses... The headlines: "I tried to bring democracy to HarperCollins, says Patten, but it was too late..."

Won't be reported in *The Times*, of course.

ire at  
fee plan

## I have seen the future and it's time to talk about it



HOWARD DAVIES

We all live longer and the state no longer provides for our old age. Time for a radical rethink of our options

IN 1900 life expectancy for a man was 49 and for a woman 45. At the turn of the next century for women it will be 80 and for men 75. This is quite an achievement. As Bruce Forsyth might say, " Didn't we do well?"

During this century life has become less nasty, brutish and certainly, less short. The ageing of society represents a triumph for medical science and for the improvements in social conditions. But not only are we living longer, we are also having fewer children and having them later. In 1994 for the first time more women in Britain had children in their early to mid 30s than in their early to mid 20s.

Change is usually viewed in any public policy debate as a "problem". The ageing of society, is no exception to this. Although the ability of most people to lead longer, healthier lives is to be welcomed, the shift in the balance of our population must lead to changes in many aspects of how we arrange our affairs. This is bound to affect distribution of resources between the generations. It can also cause conflicts. We see it in the uncertainty over our future pensions: in 1961 there were four people in the working population for every pensioner; by 2030 that ratio will have halved. Globalisation, the information superhighway and technological advances are all having a profound effect upon our lives. But the impact of demographic change has the potential to match them all.

The phenomenon may take 30 years to have its greatest impact but the signs of change are already around us. It is not hard to spot a pattern between pressures on the Health Service; speculation about people living to 120; a woman having a child at 60; pressure on the Green Belt partly from the growth of single person households; and the need to reform the pensions regime. That is why we are starting an initiative with wide implications for the way we think about these issues. It is called the Debate of the Age and it aims to be the biggest exercise in public consultation ever undertaken in this country outside the formal political process.

The Debate will not however, only be about what government should do. For a start, we promise to be sceptical of those who protest their willingness to pay higher taxes to fund numerous deserving causes only to vote the other way in the secrecy of the ballot box. It is also about highlighting what is happening so that organisations and individuals can plan their futures accordingly.

The world has moved on since the NHS

was founded. Then 60 per cent of the population were under 20 compared with less than half that today. Moreover, in the post-war era when the Welfare State took on its present shape, actuarial projections suggested that average life expectancy would be only three years beyond retirement. Perhaps the state will decide to dip deeper into its pockets to help tomorrow's elderly.

But that is not the trend at present and if the state will not pick up the tab then individuals need to understand that and plan accordingly. Politicians often say such things but no one has yet consulted broadly with those who will be affected to see what their preferred options are.

The Debate may be regarded cynically to start with. After all, we are talking about events which culminate 30 years from now and there is a tendency to assume that citizens are not interested in complex problems or planning for a new century. But I believe the cynics will be proved wrong. The issues concerned are of central importance to the type of country we want Britain to be. In the past, big population changes have resulted from the Black Death, the Industrial Revolution or the First World War. None of these events was predictable. Conversely, the forthcoming population changes can be read several years ahead and we can cushion their impact through taking action now.

I spend much of my time trying to ensure that pensions and long-term savings products can be bought with confidence. Complex financial services products were once the preserve of the relatively well-off. Now they are relevant to the great majority of the population. People do adapt their expectations – as long as they are given the information to assess their choices in advance.

### debate of the age

Dependence on occupational pension scheme no longer reflects many people's career patterns. There is a wide acceptance that the state will provide only a basic pension and benefits safety net. So we already know that need to save to ensure that old age is not synonymous with a descent into poverty, although we are still unsure about how to maximize our prosperity across our life-spans.

An important part of the Debate will be about how we pay for age. But it is not only or even primarily about elderly people. It should be controversial and address thoroughly difficult social, economic and moral issues. Some on issues a consensus may emerge but even where it does, people will be better informed about these issues which will have a major impact on their lives.

We want some 30 million people to play some part over the next two years. It should be good for policy-making and insofar as it increases understanding and involves us all, good for democracy too.

Howard Davies is President of Debate of the Age. Anyone who would like to register their views should call 0800 783 4652 or use the website [www.age2000.org.uk](http://www.age2000.org.uk)

SOME people are never happy. Now that Britain's "creatives" are being given the official recognition they've craved for they hate it. First an anarchist singer whose real name is Nigel tips cold water over John Prescott and now designer Wayne Hemingway against "Cool Britannia" and the "middle-aged" values of new MPs like me.

I'm sorry we're not cool enough for Wayne. It's tough to be cool when a typical constituency day includes abseiling down a tower block in a gale for charity, calling the numbers at OAP bingo, trying to help 20 constituents at surgery and dancing at the Labour Club.

Parliament is worse: stuffy, tradition-bound, infuriating,

and the biggest single export,

Wayne should try getting elected and see how good he looks bobbing up and down saying: "Yes Ma'am, no Ma'am and three bags full to the Right Gentleman."

But this is exactly why Britain needs re-branding. "Cool Britannia" is a media, not a government invention, but I don't mind the tag as long as it means that we're questioning how we see ourselves and how we're viewed by others. The world still sees Britain as a backward-looking theme park of royal pageantry, poor food and stiff upper lip. UK products are viewed as low-tech and bad value. None of this is true of a country that is innovative, diverse and tolerant. Pop music is the biggest single export,

## 19/COMMENT

THE INDEPENDENT  
THURSDAY 5 MARCH 1998

# The puppet-master of the Balkans is running out of strings to pull

If the West wants peace in regions of ethnic hatred, it must be prepared to intervene, says Rupert Cornwell

ONE DICTATOR is back in his box – at least for a week or two. A couple of weeks ago, Robin Cook was reading the riot act to Saddam Hussein. Now he is in Belgrade doing the same to Slobodan Milosevic, connoisseur of fine Scotch whisky, President of what is left of the former Yugoslavia, and perennial Balkan troublemaker.

The trouble this time is in the province of Kosovo, part of Serbia but populated for 90 per cent by ethnic Albanians. At which point acute Balkan fatigue among readers may already have set in. And you may be forgiven that reaction. Wolf has been cried time and again over Kosovo; yet when almost every other possible Balkan conflict has happened, this one has not. But Kosovo contains the seeds of a disaster greater even than Bosnia. For despite its barbarity, and the horrors of "ethnic cleansing", the Bosnian conflict was confined within the former Yugoslavia; any co-incidence between Sarajevo 1992 and Sarajevo 1914 was purely geographical.

But today's undeclared war in the province is a different proposition. The first link in the Doomsday chain is obviously neighbouring Albania (much of it in a state of quasi-anarchy). Next door lies Macedonia, with its large and voracious Albanian minority. But trouble in Macedonia could well drag Greece, hypersensitive to events in that country, into the fray... and if Greece, then why not Turkey? None of this has happened yet – but the Kosovo crisis is veering out of control.

Like most disputes in the Balkans, the origins of this one go back centuries; but its current version stems from the refusal of Mr Milosevic to give back the autonomy he stripped from the province ten years ago. In 1997 the conflict was radicalised by the guerrilla Kosovo Liberation Army, committed to full independence. Inevitably, the emergence of this force undermined Ibrahim Rugova, the political leader of the Kosovo Albanians, who had largely managed to keep the dispute non-violent. Then last weekend, Serb security forces killed at least 20 Albanians. The international community clings publicly to the notion that a deal for autonomy short of independence can be struck. But after the latest events, most Albanians simply want out. The powder-keg is primed. Student demonstrations next week could provide the match.

And yet however perverse it may sound, there is hope to be extracted from this mess, even as Mr Cook beats the path to Belgrade well worn by countless other Western emissaries whom President Milosevic has received and then ignored. For one thing, in contrast to their sabre-rattling over the Aegean and Cyprus, Greece and Turkey are acting with the utmost care. And surely, surely, the West has learnt from its mistakes in Bosnia where but for its pusillanimity towards the Bosnian Serbs, the war might have been stopped in 1992 or 1993.

Expect no miracles from the EU, in whose name Mr Cook will be speaking. We have had the standard condemnations of Serbian violence, denunciations of "terrorism" and pious exhortations to restraint and dialogue. We had much of that in Bosnia too. Expect none either from the United Nations, if the formalistic pleadings of Mrs Mary Robinson, its High Commissioner for Human Rights, are anything to go by.

But then again, as Bosnia proved *ad naseum*, you cannot ask the UN to keep the peace if there is no peace to keep.

Which leaves NATO, or more exactly, the US. It was air strikes in 1995 which gave teeth to Richard Holbrooke's negotiating mission and helped drive Mr

Milosevic to sign the Dayton peace accords, and it is a NATO stabilisation force which is today keeping the peace in Bosnia.

So why not a similar approach over



Grieving in Kosovo:  
Serbian police killed  
16 Albanian  
protestors  
in the latest  
clamp-down  
  
Photograph:  
Reuters

Kosovo, if the Serbs persist in their violent denial of rights to the Albanian majority? If that causes Mr Milosevic to turn against the West, much better that he vent his spleen against us who have the means and the might to resist, rather than against the desperate Kosovo Albanians who have tasted his poison often enough already. As Bosnia also proved, if the West really desires peace in places where ethnic hatred runs fierce and deep, it must be there to provide it. And acting as enforcer in Kosovo would be far better employment for British and American forces than sitting in the Gulf, threatening Iraq with attacks that would only inflate the prestige of Saddam Hussein and destabilise that region further. In the case of Mr Milosevic, the opposite is true.

For, whatever happens next, the puppet master of the Balkans is running out of strings to pull. His dream of transforming Yugoslavia into a "Greater Serbia" has crumbled. True, Dayton did create a separate Bosnian Serb statelet. But apart from Serbia itself, the only other component of the former Yugoslavia which remains is Montenegro, run by a relative moderate whose election Milosevic tried to prevent. And now Kosovo, the holiest name in Serbian history, is slipping from his grasp.

If Milosevic restores to the province its former autonomy, he will be pilloried by Serbian nationalists. If he tries to complete the crack-down he has started, insisting that Kosovo is an "internal affair" in which the West has no right to meddle, the sanctions which are crippling the rump-Yugoslavia he rules will certainly not be loosened. Quite possibly they will be tightened, which can only strengthen the cause of those among his countrymen who want to rejoin the world. Or there could be a very direct response from Nato.

Mr Milosevic of course is the craftiest of customers capable of turning the bitter foes of yesterday into today's tacit allies of convenience. He has held on to power with a brutal grip. But Kosovo just might be his last stand. The Balkan crisis, it could be said, began there, when the Ottoman Turks destroyed the Serbian Knights in 1389. Six centuries later, it was Kosovo where Milosevic made his rabidly nationalist speech which unleashed the latest chapter of the crisis. And it is Kosovo where, this decade of Balkan mayhem could, and should end.

## Sorry I'm not cool, but that doesn't mean I'm no use



BEN  
BRADSHAW

A reply to Wayne Hemingway, who accused New Labour of being old at heart

HALLELUJAH, the Millennium Dome is going to be the envy of our advertising world. It appears our Millennium festivities, described last week by the Prime Minister in lush tones of portentous religiosity, will cross every frontier in the history of commercial hucksterism. If you thought the Dome's theme-park contents were crass, its list of influence-hungry corporate sponsors obvious, brace yourself. Millennium nappy worse. For starters, check out the Dome's "Body Zone", whose focal point is a giant androgynous figure accompanied by a huge nappy-wearing baby. Forget about the debate about whether the baby wears a "natural" or a disposable nappy. A spokesman

for the New Millennium Experience Company confirmed to Pandora that the nappy will in fact be sold as a giant advertisement. "It's a play-off between Huggies and Pampers," said Jez Agar of the NMEC, his excitement at the sales potential outstanding any actual deal. His company will presumably be flogging ad space on every statue, wall, chair and toilet-roll holder throughout the vast exhibition. The promo literature for the Dome's "Body Zone" claims that it "designed to amaze, with the world's biggest physical representation of the human form, a rich and intellectual, highly accessible exploration". Shouldn't that last word read "exploitation"?

BY COMPARISON, the \$500m theme park which Michael Jackson is planning to build in Warsaw, Poland, may turn out to be a triumph of good taste and idealism. Yes, Jacko Land is going to be a "world of childhood". Will it



feature huge statues of androgynous youths in Calvin-sponsored underpants – or does the crutch-clutching singer have better taste?

THE LATEST word is that *Titanic* has just become the first film to gross over \$1bn. Amazing, really, with an ending that sends millions of people away shaking their heads at the absurdity of its final scene, in which a "priceless" necklace called the "Coeur de la Mer" is deliberately tossed into the ocean on a sentimental whim. In re-

ality, that necklace was made of something called cubic zirconium by Asprey's of Bond Street. Now they have gone back to the workroom and produced a \$3.5m version of the piece that includes a 170-carat Ceylon sapphire and 30 carats of diamonds.

It will be auctioned in Beverly Hills on 21 March to raise funds for The Princess Diana, Princess of Wales Fund.

YESTERDAY the hacks who comprise the NMEC's Parliamentary branch met in a room deep in the Commons and passed a motion condemning Ken Livingstone. This was in response to Ken's tabling of a Commons motion attacking the strikers at the "Morning Star", which made him the first Labour MP since the last election to attack an "official" labour dispute. If you don't understand all the ramifications of this heated Left v Left media battle, then you're in the same boat as Pandora.

MEANWHILE Matt Drudge, the fearless "cyber outlaw" gossip columnist who broke the Monica Lewinsky story on his Internet web site, has signed a deal with Rupert Murdoch's Fox News Network. Is this the first cyber sell-out? Drudge, who sports thick dreads and even thicker nerd glasses, will be presenting a weekly half-hour chat show.

This follows his appearance on NBC's "Meet The Press" several weeks back when he waved a copy of Murdoch's NY Post at the camera, praising its coverage of Clinton. Apparently Drudge is also being pursued by an American publisher, Judith Regan of Regan Books, an imprint of Murdoch's Harper Collins, to write an anti-establishment media book. But don't expect any scoops about China at [www.drudgereport.com](http://www.drudgereport.com) in the near future.

Pandora

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## INDEPENDENT

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Signs point both ways on interest rates as booming services industry contrasts sharply with slump in retail sector on day of MPC meeting

## Skill shortages highlight Bank's rates dilemma

By Diane Coyle  
Economics Editor

FRESH signs that the pace of activity picked up in service industries such as finance and communications last month piled on the interest rate agony yesterday, as the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) started its two-day meeting.

Conflicting signals from services and manufacturing mean experts are uncertain whether or not to expect an increase in the cost of borrowing from the current rate of 7.25 per cent when the Committee makes its announcement at midday today.

Kevin Darlington, an economist at ABN-Amro, said the extremely buoyant survey of the service sector was probably not enough by itself to sway today's decision. But he added: "It is a portent of faster GDP growth, we can expect a rate rise in the next two to three months."

On the other hand, Francesca Masson at Goldman Sachs predicted a quarter point rise today.

The MPC's vote was split five to three in favour of leaving rates unchanged in January, and is believed to have been divided on the same lines in February.

Analysts fully expect another split this month in the face of the dilemma posed by Britain's two-speed economy, but are not sure whether any members will have changed sides.

Industry's case for leaving rates alone was pressed yesterday by Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade. In a radio interview she said: "The position is one where people have got some concerns and there are some manufacturers who are feeling the pinch."

However, the survey from the Chartered Institute of

Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) showed the pace of growth in services picking up to a seven-month high in February. An increase in the activity index from 59.0 to 60.7 – both well above the 50 "break-even" level – was driven by a surge in new business.

Employment rose, but not by enough to prevent an increase in the backlog of outstanding business. Companies said the limit on recruitment was still shortages, which made it difficult to replace staff who left.

As a result, costs – mainly salaries – increased, with one in five respondents reporting an increase during the month compared with only 4 per cent reporting a decline. Prices charged rose too, and at a faster rate than the previous month, although they have been growing at a slower pace than costs.

Peter Thomson, director-general of the CIPS, said the buoyancy applied across the service industries (although the survey excludes retailing). Skill shortages were most severe in IT

"The pressure is greatest in a narrow range of skills. Those people can virtually write their own salary cheques," he said.

Manpower, the employment services agency which is one of the UK's biggest employers, confirmed this picture of shortages. As well as the computer industry, there was also near-saturation of the jobs market for staff at call centres and telemarketing operations in some areas.

But Tony Hoskins of Manpower added that, aside from retailing – where demand for staff was slackening off, there was general buoyancy of demand. "I would say manufacturing remains strong almost despite the pound," he said.

The CIPS survey covers 500 businesses in five sectors: hotels and restaurants, transport and communications, finance, information technology, business services and personal services. In total, these account for about a third of national output, compared with manufacturing's 23 per cent share.

The strong pound has kept manufacturing in the doldrums. According to the latest official figures, two broad categories of services – transport and communication and business services and finance – grew by 6.5 and 7.6 per cent respectively last year. Manufacturing output, by contrast, expanded just 1.6 per cent and has slowed further.

In the retail sector, yesterday brought warnings of a sales slowdown from three furniture and carpet businesses. Carpetright, DFS and MFI, Retailing, excluded from the CIPS survey, has enjoyed strong volume growth according to official figures, but this can be explained partly by price discounting.

Richard Edwards, retail an-

alyst at Salomon Smith Barney, said the slump in demand for more expensive purchases such as sofas and carpets could affect the decision on rates. "This sends an interesting message to the Bank of England. Any 'big ticket' stuff is dying. It is only the smaller item retailers such as the DIY stores that are doing well."

Tony Shiret, retail analyst at Credit Suisse First Boston agreed: "It probably reduces the need for an interest rate rise. Expectations had been bloated by the windfall factor of last year but underlying demand does not look that good." Analysts said they expected more durable goods retailers to issue similar warnings. "There are probably more in the pipeline," said Mark Josephson of Panmure Gordon.

MFI, the kitchens and furniture group said trading in its key winter sale had been below ex-

pectations and specifically



Shares in MFI, Carpetright and DFS, the furniture retailer, fell sharply yesterday as analysts cut their profit forecasts

Photograph: Ted Ditchburn

## Top retailers hit by new year sales slowdown

By Nigel Coyle  
City Correspondent

Three large retailers flashed the warning sign on interest rates to the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee yesterday when they reported a sharp slowdown in sales. On the day the committee began its two-day meeting on interest rates, MFI, Carpetright and DFS, the furniture retailer, all said sales had been weak in late January and through February. Shares in all three fell sharply as analysts cut their profit forecasts.

MFI was the worst hit with its shares down 23 per cent to 98p. DFS shed 21 per cent to 463.5p while Carpetright gave up 15 per cent to 422.5p. The warnings dragged down shares in other durable goods retailers such as Allied Carpets, Dixons and Kingfisher.

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alyst at Salomon Smith Barney, said the slump in demand for more expensive purchases such as sofas and carpets could affect the decision on rates. "This sends an interesting message to the Bank of England. Any 'big ticket' stuff is dying. It is only the smaller item retailers such as the DIY stores that are doing well."

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MFI, the kitchens and furniture group said trading in its key winter sale had been below ex-

pectations and specifically

blamed higher interest rates for the malaise. DFS warned that this year's profits would be flat and said the whole furniture sector was suffering. Later in the day Carpetright issued its own warning saying it had suffered a slowdown and that sales had not met expectations in the last 10 weeks.

John Randall, chief executive of MFI said homeowners whose mortgages payments are adjusted by annual reviews would have been informed in January of their new payments, which he said could rise by around 20 per cent from April. Mr Randall said MFI had enjoyed three good weeks after Boxing Day but since then "everything has fallen away". He said, the short-term outlook was "not particularly buoyant".

MFI said sales in the 16 weeks to date were up by just 2 per cent. Analysts cut their profit forecasts from £85m to £52m.

Carpetright said its sales had not met expectations. "From being 8 per cent ahead on a like

for like basis sales have not met anticipated levels during the last 10 weeks," it said.

"Trading conditions in the carpet market are tough, but Carpetright and Carpet Depot are continuing to pick up market share. Margins remain strong despite the market climate and continue to be above last year's levels," it added.

The company expected to be trading from around 300 Carpetright and Carpet Depot stores by its year end and anticipated opening around 20 stores next year.

Carpet and furniture retailers enjoyed a good year in 1997 boosted by relatively low interest rates and the benefits of windfall payouts from de-mutualising building societies. But as interest rates rose and consumers appeared to save a high proportion of their windfalls many retailers have feared a slowdown.

## PowderJect shares soar on R&D deal with Glaxo for high-speed 'injections'

By Andrew Yates

Shares in PowderJect, the biotechnology group, leapt by one-third to 418.5p as the group announced Europe's largest ever pharmaceutical research and development deal. It has teamed up with Glaxo Wellcome, one of the biggest drug groups in the world, to develop a revolutionary system of driving drugs through the skin at high speed which could eventually replace injections.

The deal promises to transform the financial fortunes of PowderJect which only floated on

the stock market last year and has yet to make a profit. Glaxo is paying \$24m (£15m) up front for world-wide rights to market and develop a total of 11 new treatments. It could end up paying more than £180m as these treatments progress through clinical trials.

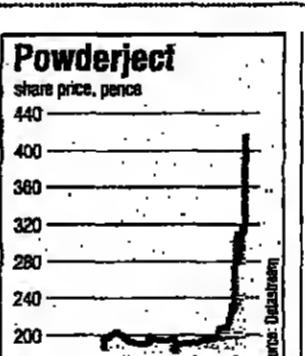
"So far trial results [from the new system] have exceeded our expectations and this is just a small part of our potential market," he added.

Allan Baxter, group research director at Glaxo, said: "We are particularly excited about this novel technology which offers Glaxo Wellcome a unique and competitive opportunity to

build on our established strength in anti-virals and our emerging portfolio in cancer."

The partners will work to develop a range of more effective vaccines using DNA to create a greater resistance to diseases. As well as vaccines for Hepatitis B, HIV and cancer, Glaxo will look to work on a portfolio of other remedies for contagious diseases.

Glaxo demonstrated its confidence in the new system by taking a 7.7 per cent stake in PowderJect at a cost of £12.1m. It has pledged not to buy or sell any of these shares for the next two years.



PowderJect is working on a wide range of other applications for its new process, and has also signed agreements with Chiron Science and Roche to develop other treatments.

The group was founded in 1993 in Oxford to exploit the University's research in the field of drug vaccine delivery.

Although the family owns most of the company, it only plays a minor role in its operations since new management was brought in 1994. Pat Dyas, chairman and non-executive director, is the last family member on the board.

The fire in the head office and warehouse in Croydon, south London, in December caused significant disruption to the business which had to arrange supplies direct from manufacturers. The company said it had received an interim payment from the insurers of £2.5m and said the finances of the company "remain sound".

Roger Peedie, the chairman of Clark's Shoes, has been appointed a non-executive director to help in the sale process.

South London, in December, was hit by a fire which damaged with DIY equipment, light electrical goods and kitchenware.

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## BMW apologises to Vickers over Rolls-Royce remarks

By Michael Harrison

THE CHAIRMAN of BMW, the German car maker, yesterday apologised to Vickers after reportedly describing the way it was handling the sale of its luxury car business Rolls-Royce as a "game of poker".

Bernard Pieschetsrieder telephoned Sir Colin Chandler, the Vickers chairman, saying he had been very embarrassed by the reports but that his remarks had been distorted. Mr Pieschetsrieder was also reported to have criticised Vickers' decision to launch the new Rolls model, the Seraph, before the sale was completed.

BMW is one of four companies expected to put in a bid for the Crewe-based luxury car maker by the end of this month. Volkswagen, Toyota and Ford are also thought to be interested in bidding. Daimler-Benz may throw its hat in the ring, even though it was reported yesterday to have pulled out.

Vickers is not planning to entertain a bid from a group of Rolls-Royce owners led by Kevin Morley, the former marketing and sales director of Rover. The group had not been

sent the memorandum of sale by Vickers' advisers Lazard Frères, which it had not demonstrated its financial credibility, said Sir Colin.

The sale is expected to raise £350m-£400m, although estimates for the value of Rolls range from as low as £200m to as much as £500m. Sir Colin said that it would take until the middle of the year, however, for the sale to be completed.

Sir Colin also confirmed that Vickers had pulled out of talks to take over GKN's armoured vehicles division. The plan would have been to merge it with Vickers' Challenger tank division but Sir Colin said the two sides could not agree on a price.

GKN is thought to have beaten a consortium led by Vickers to a multi-billion pound contract to develop a new multi-role armoured vehicle for the British, French and German armies. Based on this, GKN has put what Vickers regards as an excessive valuation on the business.

Sir Colin said it appeared to be the German government which was anxious to proceed with the new vehicle quickly and

had selected the GKN-led Eurokonsortium ahead of the Vickers consortium. But he questioned whether the design selected was the best value for money and urged the UK government not to be "bounced" into a decision which was against its best interests.

He was speaking as Vickers reported a 9 per cent decline in operating profits last year to £75.8m. The figures exclude £57m of exceptional, mainly goodwill write-offs relating to the disposal of its medical division. Vickers also spent £2.4m defending itself against the abortive bid from the automotive group Mayflower.

Although Rolls-Royce car sales rose 10 per cent, profits from the automotive division dipped from £37.6m to £30.5m as margins were squeezed by the need to sell older models in advance of the launch of the Seraph.

Vickers has enough order to keep its tank factories in Leeds and Newcastle busy for the next two years and Sir Colin said it was hopeful of sealing a £350m order for Challenger 2 tanks from Qatar in the next three months.

## Family hoists for-sale sign as fire leaves Robert Dyas heading into the red

By Nigel Coyle

ROBERT DYAS, the high street ironmonger with roots going back more than 120 years, is to be sold following the disruption of a fire in its warehouse in December.

The founding Dyas family, which still controls the business, took the decision following a strategic review by Coopers & Lybrand. The business recorded

profits of £1.2m last year on sales of £24m. However, this year the disruption of the fire is expected to push the company into the red. Coopers said they were hopeful of finding a buyer and had received "an astonishing level of interest". A sale price of around £20m is expected.

The business was founded by Robert Dyas who, it is claimed, came over from Ireland in 1872 with £5 in his pocket and set up

its first shop in the heart of London. The business fared well until the Second World War when its shops were badly damaged in the Blitz. Two brothers, Pat and Gerald Dyas, then rebuilt the business up again and it now has 67 stores across the South-East of England.

In a market increasingly dominated by out-of-town superstores such as B&Q and Homebase, Robert Dyas has

been forced to adapt to changing consumer tastes and has invested heavily in its website and catalogues.

Pat Dyas, chairman, said: "We are looking for a buyer who can help us to move forward and develop the business. We are open to offers from anyone who is interested."

## STOCK MARKETS

FTSE 100	Close	Change	Chg %pt	52 wks high	52 wks low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5733.70	-74.60	-1.29	5850.00	4195.10	3.21
FTSE 250	6358.70	-12.70	-0.34	6529.50	4394.20	2.97
FTSE 350	2749.70	-30.30	-1.09	2795.50	2073.70	3.16
FTSE All Share	2978.55	-22.42	-0.71	2720.95	2056.07	3.14
FTSE SmallCap	2486.63	4.10	0.17	2482.10	2182.10	2.79
FTSE MidCap	1360.00	0.62	0.05	1358.50	1225.20	3.18
FTSE AIM	1013.20	-1.50	-0.15	1135.50	985.50	0.98
Dow Jones	6133.63	-80.61	-1.30	6862.06	5836.78	1.64
Nikkei</						



THE INVESTMENT COLUMN  
EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

**Deals add fizz to Cadbury shares**

CADBURY SCHWEPPES has had a storming run recently with shares in the soft drinks and confectionery group increasing by almost a third since the start of the year. This has been largely on the back of the two drinks deals signed in recent weeks which have soothed investor concerns about how Cadbury's was going to secure distribution for main drinks brands such as Dr Pepper and Seven Up to retailers.

In January, Cadbury extended its contract with Coca-Cola Enterprises, the US bottler, to distribute Dr Pepper in the America. Last month it signed a £183m joint venture in the US to buy two independent bottlers.

Drinks deals also complicated Cadbury's figures horribly last year. Pre-tax profits of £987m were boosted by the £442m sale of its stake in Coca-Cola Schweppes Beverages last year. But stripping out those proceeds, profits from continuing operations increased by 13 per cent to £575m, bang in line with market expectations.

The key issue for Cadbury remains its Seven Up brand in the US. It is up against ferocious competition from the Coca-Cola owned Sprite brand, which has increased its share by 9 per cent to 6.7 per cent in the year. Seven Up, by contrast, has lost 0.2 percentage points of its share to stand at just over 3 per cent, though it has reversed the sales decline.

Additional problems could come from Pepsi, which owns Seven Up internationally but not in the US. It is trying to gain a toe-hold in the lemon and lime market and is currently testing a new brand called Storm. Cadbury's chief executive, John Sunderland, says no soft drinks brand launched in America since the War has managed to secure a market share of more than 1 per cent. He neglects to mention Surge, a recent Coca-Cola launch, which grabbed almost 1 per cent in its first year.

Even so, with Pepper performing above the market average, Cadbury needs only to stabilise Seven Up to keep investors happy.

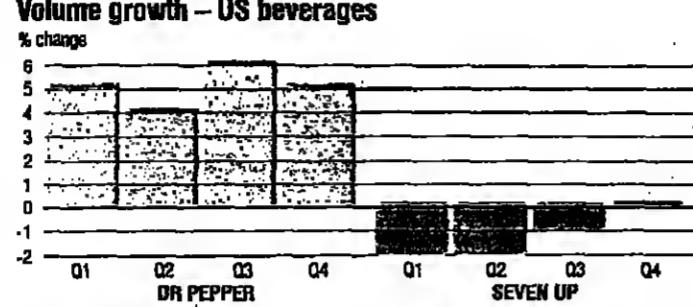
There was more good news elsewhere with losses in the Russian confectionery start-up diminishing. Profits in the Far East have fallen due to the economic turmoil in the region but Cadbury may use falling asset values to make an acquisition. Management admits that it has looked at possible targets but not pursued them.

**Cadbury Schweppes: At a glance**

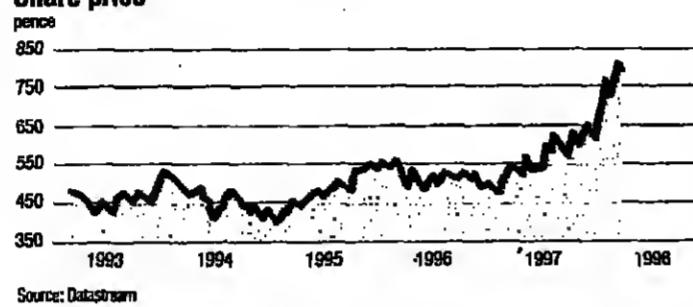
Market value: £7.8bn, share price 787p (-2.5p)

Five-year record	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Turnover (£m)	3.7	4.0	4.7	5.1	4.2
Pre-tax profits (£m)	416	478	526	582	887
Earnings per share (p)	29.8	30.2	31.3	34.1	68.7
Dividends per share (p)	14.0	15.2	16.0	17.0	18.0

**Volume growth - US beverages**



**Share price**



Source: Datamann

On current-year profit forecasts of £630m, the shares, down 2.5p to 787p yesterday, trade on a forward rating of 19. A solid hold.

**Cookson shapes up after disposals**

COOKSON yesterday made its first significant step towards salvaging its battered reputation in the City. The accident-prone industrial components group has produced one disappointment after another over the last few years. If that was not enough, its share rating has suffered from the dreaded conglomerate discount in a sector tainted by high-profile casualties such as Hanson.

But Stephen Howard, Cookson's new chief executive, has set about disentangling the sprawling group with gusto. He has already raised £140m

from sales and could get at least another £100m from its fibres business, which supplies the carpet industry.

This sale marks the end of the main disposal programme. The business has been slimmed down and simplified to three divisions: electronics, ceramics and engineering.

Cookson can comfortably spend £400m on new acquisitions. Return on capital employed is finally moving towards cost of capital, implying it is using its money far more wisely. However, the real way to restore faith in the group will be to prove that it can start producing strong and consistent organic growth from the businesses it has left.

The group is beginning to move in the right direction. Cookson shrugged off a £12m hit from the strong pound and the economic turmoil in the Far East to produce a credible 8 per cent rise in underlying profits to £179m in 1997. There are fears the Asian crisis will begin to bite into earnings this year. However, Cookson appears not to be

as vulnerable as most electronic groups, being less exposed to the cheaper consumer goods markets. In fact, with prices tumbling, it is even eyeing up more acquisitions in Asia. A greater emphasis on service should also bring an improvement in group margins.

Cookson's shares rose 13.5p to 240p yesterday after it calmed fears over Asia. Analysts forecast full-year profits of £193m, putting the shares on a prospective p/e ratio of 11. Cookson looks to have turned the corner. Good value.

**Hays confident of rising profits**

CAN Ronnie Frost do no wrong? Investors who backed the ebullient chairman of Hays, the business services group, at the time of its flotation in 1989 will have seen the value of their investment rise almost 10-fold. Even a failed tilt at Christian Salvesen, the troubled logistics group, has not stopped the rise.

Yesterday, Mr Frost was at it again, reporting pre-tax profits (before exceptional) up 29 per cent at £92.2m and saying he felt more confident than at any time since the flotation. In a falling market, the shares put on 8p to 943p.

It's hard to pick holes in Hays' performance. In distribution, the company's margins are better than its competitors' because it eschews cut-throat logistics deals in favour of first-time contracts. Late last year, Hays enjoyed a coup when it convinced BP and Shell to award it the contract to distribute non-petroleum products to their forecourts. Margins dropped to 9 per cent, but this was blamed on acquisitions, and returns should improve once they have been fully integrated.

Meanwhile, the commercial business produced 21 per cent growth while personnel turned in a sparkling 41 per cent increase in profits. Hays is pragmatic about moving into new business areas so, by invitation from its customers, it recently moved into IT personnel and has gone from supplying staff for a British Gas centre to managing the whole show.

Future growth will be both organic and by acquisition. Hays has proved itself a shrewd predator in the past and it is hunting for small strategic deals on the Continent. The only question is how much of that is reflected in the share price. Broker Panmure Gordon forecasts full-year profits of £194m, rising to £223m, putting the shares at a 50 per cent premium to the rest of the market. High enough.

Mr Frost is right to be optimistic. Hays' success is built on a solid foundation of sound management and a clear strategy. The market is likely to reward him for his efforts.

## BICC lays new plans for cable division as profits dive 15%

"We have taken a radical restructuring, with the loss of 2,000 jobs in Europe in a push to drive its power cables operations back to profitability and the removal of £45m from its cost base," said Viscount Weir, BICC's chairman.

The moves were made against a background of overcapacity and poor prices in most parts of the European energy and cable markets and a strong pound. They resulted in a charge of £140m in the 1997 accounts for asset write-downs and other rationalisation costs.

After exceptions the group made a pre-tax loss of £50m versus a profit of £64m.

BICC was more upbeat about near-term prospects for its construction arm. Balfour Beatty, the division, which had about half the group's turnover, was the star performer in 1997 with operating profits of £42m from £10m last time. A recent reorganisation that saw Balfour create a single organisation responsible for winning and executing large projects is expected to improve margins, currently around 3 per cent.

Elsewhere, BICC does not expect the Asian crisis to have any real impact.

## Year 2000 brought to book

By Roger Trapp

COMPANIES are to be required to disclose the risks and uncertainties for their business and operations stemming from the millennium bug, or year 2000 problem, under rules published by the Accounting Standards Board (ASB) today.

With the world-wide cost of fixing the problem said to be as much as £400bn, many big companies are already disclosing significant estimated costs. The watchdog's Urgent Issues Taskforce said in most cases the costs incurred in meeting the problem through such means as modifying software should be written off to the profit and loss account.

The ASB also points out that details of risks and other un-

knowns that may threaten the existence of the business are even more important for investors than information on the costs incurred.

"Although the year 2000 problem is not the only risk faced by an entity, disclosure is justified by the pervasiveness and complexity of the issue and the extent of its possible effects," says the body, adding that disclosure may help account users distinguish between organisations that are planning for the issue and those that have not properly investigated it.

The taskforce is today issuing rules for accounting for the introduction of the euro. While noting that the overall effect will probably not be as severe as the impact of the millennium bug, it says it will

affect many businesses even if they are not located in states adopting the single currency.

It therefore says that where the potential impact is likely to be significant it should be disclosed in the narrative to the annual report and accounts. The ASB is urging companies to adopt the new rules as early as possible but, in any event, for accounting periods ending on or after 23 March 1998.

Sir David Tweedie, ASB chairman, said: "It is difficult to overstate the potential impact of the year 2000 problem. It follows that the costs of tackling it need to be properly accounted for and properly disclosed. But more important still, users of accounts need to be given a clear assessment of the risks involved for the enterprise in question."

## Oil projects freeze to cool economy

NORWAY'S centrist government has devised an unprecedented scheme to dampen booming economic growth. It announced yesterday it was postponing all oil and gas projects by a year.

"There are big dangers that the economy will overheat," said Marit Arnstad, the Oil and Energy Minister, told parliament. She said the delays, designed to cut 5.2bn crowns (£4.2bn) from 1998 investments of 66.9bn crowns, would cool the economy.

The reductions affect 12 oil and gas projects, including British Petroleum's Ula Tira.

"The government has decided to delay investments in all fields under consideration by one year to 1999 from 1998," Ms Arnstad said.

The central bank has forecast gross domestic product growth of 5 per cent in 1998.

Norway is the second largest oil exporter in the world after Saudi Arabia, pumping 3.3 million barrels per day. The delays would have a long-term impact on the development of Norway's reserves and are unrelated to efforts by OPEC to prop up sagging oil prices.

Ms Arnstad said that, without any curbs, projected 1998 investments in oil and gas sector would surge to 66.9bn crowns,

## Hoverspeed restarts ferry route in Holyman deal

HOVERSPEED, which is owned by Sea Containers, will restart one of the oldest cross-Channel routes as part of a new joint venture with Australian shipping and transport group Holyman. Hoverspeed will start a new fast-ferry service between the Dover and Ostend in Belgium tomorrow. Dover-Ostend services were operated for 147 years until 31 December, 1993 when the then Belgian state operator RMT transferred the service to Ramsgate in the UK. The new service is part of Hoverspeed's agreement with Holyman, announced yesterday, to take over Silja Line's 50 per cent stake in Holyman Sally for a nominal sum.

## Emcit converts to unit trust

THE BOARD of Emerging Markets Country Investment Trust (Emcit) announced proposals yesterday for the winding up and liquidation of the company. Under the proposals, which will be voted on by shareholders on 27 March, the company would be liquidated, its assets placed in Emerging Markets Trust and units distributed to shareholders. City of London Investment Management - Emcit's managers - said: "This is a painless way of shareholders realising the value of their investment." Earlier this week the chairman of the £85m Overseas Investment Trust resigned, just days before the board was due to publish proposals for the future of the company.

## LucasVarity in joint venture

LUCASVARTY and the US-based TRW Inc have formed a joint venture to design, develop and manufacture column and pinion drive electric-steering systems for passenger cars and light commercial vehicles. LucasVarity will receive \$50m (£30m) from the new joint venture company, TRW LucasVarity Electric Steering Ltd, in return for its electric column drive steering technology and assets. TRW will license its pinion drive technology to the new company, in which it will have a 51 per cent stake while LucasVarity will have 49 per cent.

## Faber Prest offer agreed

HARSCO CORP of the US has agreed a 500p a share cash offer for Faber Prest which values the British company at around £55.9m. Faber Prest provides services to the steel industry. The offer represents an 8.1 per cent premium to Faber Prest's share price of 462.5p yesterday, and a 110.5 per cent premium to its share price of 237.5p on 5 November, the day before the British company said it was in talks that could lead to an offer. The shares closed yesterday at 494p.

## Brussels US telecom inquiry

THE EUROPEAN Commission has opened a full inquiry into a merger between the US telecoms companies WorldCom and MCI owing to concerns over their control of the internet. The decision echoes similar concerns in the US, where the companies face the main regulatory hurdles. "The Commission ... is concerned about the parties' combined market share in relation to the supply of internet backbone services," it said. MCI said both companies were confident the Commission would eventually approve their deal. Although both companies are American, they each have annual sales of more than 250 million ecus (£272m) in Europe - the level that triggers EU involvement.



DAWSON INTERNATIONAL's new group chief executive, Peter Forrest (left), and chairman Derek Finlay, yesterday dressed up the announcement of a 17 per cent rise in pre-tax profits with IT girl Tara-Palmer Tomkinson modelling part of its Ballantyne Cashmere autumn/winter 1998 collection.

The Scottish-based international textiles group announced profit before tax and exceptional items of £13.8m in 1997 and said its turbulent past was behind it as its turnaround strategy began to pay off. "Our roller-

coaster history we can put behind us.... For the first time since 1991-92 all our businesses are making money. That is quite a milestone," Mr Finlay said.

He said Dawson could aim for annual operating profit growth in the 10 per cent range. Its Knitwear & Clothing division, including Pringle of Scotland - standard golfers' garb - was profitable for the first time in three years.

Mr Finlay said progress had been made despite what he described as an "overvalued" pound.

Photograph: PA

## 'City use will boost support for euro'

By Katherine Butler  
in Brussels

THE INTRODUCTION of the euro to London's money markets from next January will have a powerful "ripple" effect on British political attitudes to monetary union, a leading figure in the City predicted yesterday.

Judith Mayhew, policy head at the Corporation of London, told European Union officials the City of London would become the world's premier location for trading in euro. The extent of wholesale trading in the new currency would bring so many people into contact

with it, there would be a knock-on impact in terms of political support for the project in Britain. "I am convinced there will be a ripple effect which has not been counted yet," Ms Mayhew said. She said it was "ironic" that the City of London would be better prepared than any other financial centre, when Britain would not be joining economic and monetary union (EMU) in the first wave.

A large delegation of business, political and civic leaders met European Commissioners and members of the European Parliament's monetary affairs committee to stress the point.

Ms Mayhew said "everyone" in the City would go on to a 24

# Footsie takes retailers' warnings to heart

## MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

A RAFT of profit warnings weighed heavily on an already hesitant stock market. Footsie, at one time down more than 100 points, ended 74.6 off at 5,733.1. A weak New York opening and the inevitable worries about the outcome of the Monetary Policy Committee meeting increased the uncertainty.

The power groups were among the worst hit. National Power's implied profit warning continued to generate profit downgrades. NP fell 32p to 555p and PowerGen dimmed 43p to 760p. Since Tuesday's cautious comments NP has fallen 63p and PG 72p.

After the power blip the market was ill-prepared for three retail warnings. The comments from MFI Furniture, DFS Furniture and Carpetright, nicely timed to catch the MPC's interest rate deliberations, caused sharp market drops among the retailing community.

MFI fell 30p to 98p; DFS

129p to 105p; and Carpetright 74p to 422.5p. Their choice of caution was picked up by the likes of Dixons, down 31p at 514p, and JJB Sports, 25p at 797.5p.

Next, however, highlighted the collapse. The shares fell 61p to 754p. Besides the suddenly more unfriendly high street climate, they had to contend with the continuing dismay that the long-awaited takeover by Great Universal Stores was now unlikely to materialise.

Not only has GUS got its corporate hands full with its bid for Argos but Lord Wolfson of Sunningdale, chairman of both GUS and Nest, has decided to step down from the Next chair. Cautious noises from Dresden Kleinwort Benson also contributed to the fall.

Other retailers lower included Allied Carpets, Kingfisher and Marks & Spencer. Tesco was one to notch a gain, 1.5p to 517.5p. Nikko, the

Japanese investment house, rates the shares a sell. Estimated earnings growth does not support the share rating, it says.

The profit uncertainty was also evident in other areas. Vickers, the engineer striving to sell its Rolls-Royce car division, was downbeat about the year's prospects. EROC, the cable and construction group where takeover rumours have swirled, lost 8p to 138.5p on a cut dividend.

High-flying hand-held computer maker Psion tumbled 91.5p to 328p after offering a decidedly low key trading statement and a 29 per cent profits fall; Meccano, a chemical group, plunged 76p to 277.5p, saying profits would be "considerably below" last year's £8.2m. Microgen, an IT group, fell 11p to 57.5p; it also said profits would be below expectations.

Still, the barrage of bearish comments failed to dim the SmallCap index, which moved to yet another peak. The mid cap index fell only 12.7 to 5,268.7.

Powderject, a biotech group, helped the SmallCap advance, scoring a 104p gain to 418.5p. A licensing agreement with the Glaxo Wellcome giant was responsible. The deal, which could produce \$300m of fees, was seen as a big vote of confidence in

Powderject's technology. Magnum Power, once 178.5p, was another small cap enjoying a run, up 5.25p to 145p on talk of a cash injection was near.

Among mid caps Telewest Communications put on 6p to 83.5p on bid hopes; Cookson rose 13.5p to 240p and Associated British Ports, 18.5p to 340.5p on results.

Micro Focus, the computer group, jumped 285p to 3,457.5p following profits and suggestions corporate activity was being prepared.

Mirror Group, year's figures next week, rose 8p to 179p on reports it is in talks with Ireland's Independent Newspapers which could lead to one of the groups selling its 46 per cent shareholding in Newspaper Publishing, publisher of *The Independent*, to the other.

David S Smith, the packaging group, gained 4.5p to 215p on suggestions profit upgrades are being prepared. Arjo Wiggins Appleton hardened 10p to 186.5p.

Halifax, off 27p at 925p, continued to register disappointment with its share buy-back.

Vodafone, where there was some vague talk of corporate activity, fell 16p to 536p ahead of today's Ofcom review of mobile telephones. Orange was also hit, down 22p to 325p.

Building material shares remain in demand on expectations of improved trading and take over action. Hepworth put on another 6.5p to 233p and RMC was up 40p at 970p.

Rather Press, the distributor, gained 31.5p to 494p as a 500p-a-share US bid appeared.

Springswood, the leisure group run by Adam Page, expect Midsummer Leisure, gained 12p to 108.5p. Stockbroker Charles Stanley believes last year's 80 per cent profits increase to £1.33m will be followed this year by an advance to £1.3m, with £4m in sight next year.

## TAKING STOCK

There appears to be no shortage of suitors for Chieftain, an industrial insulation engineer which put itself up for sale.

Six bids, it is believed, are under discussion; they are in the 150p-plus area. The company, traded at 123.5p, says it is maintaining a healthy order book. Profits last year rose from £678,000 to £1.7m.

AB Airlines is likely to arrive on the stock market on 23 April - St George's Day. The company hopes to raise £28m, giving it a £25m capitalisation.

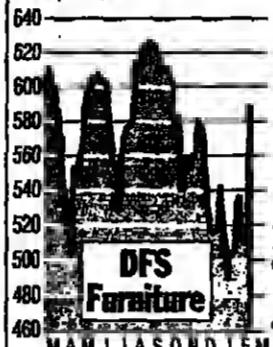
AB is launching two new routes, Shannon to Birmingham and Stansted on a code share with Aer Lingus.

Metal Bulletin, where Emas sits on 20.4 per cent, lifted profits by 15 per cent to £5.9m and should hit £6.7m this year.

It is looking for acquisitions. With an £8.5m cash pile it is prepared to pay up to £35m.

## Share spotlight

share price, pence





# Ward invests in dreams with City

## Racing

By Greg Wood

IT IS one of the great attractions of the Cheltenham Festival—and indeed, jumps racing as a whole—that it gives a small trainer a chance to go in against the big names and come away victorious. Even so, this lesson seems lost on many pointers, who prefer to invest blindly in such names as Pitman, Pipe and Nicholson, only to regret their decision bitterly when a horse with solid form but a little-known handler manages to leave the big yards standing.

It is understandable, of course, when the field for a race such as the Triumph Hurdle alone contains 30 names, and most punters' time is precious, but it is an unshakable rule of the Festival that you cannot afford to overlook anything. The only answer is to start the homework now, and mug up on horses like City Hall at the Grantham stable of Val Ward. City Hall is one of just 12 residents, but is currently reckoned the horse most likely to trouble Zafarabad, the hot favourite, in the Triumph, which opens proceedings on Gold Cup afternoon, exactly two weeks from today.

The trainer, Joe Naughton, however, her colt performs in the juvenile hurdling championship, he is unlikely to drop significantly in his trainer's estimation. "He doesn't worry, he travels beautifully, he takes everything in his stride," Ward says. "He's such an easy horse to train, he enjoys every race and he seems to improve every time."

Ward can be forgiven such unstinting praise, since she not only trains City Hall, but also owns him in partnership with her mother. Between them, they paid 50,000guineas to secure him last November, a serious investment by the standards of any training operation, but then as Ward

points out: "He's worth more than that now, but even if I got an offer, I wouldn't accept it."

The colt's value has increased as his talent has developed, and while it took him three races to lose his maiden status, victories in his last two outings have marked City Hall down as a hurdler of great promise. The form of his racecourse debut, meanwhile, when he was beaten a short-head by Sad Mad Bad and should probably have won, looks all the more creditable following Sad Mad Bad's success in the Victor Ludorum Hurdle at Haydock last weekend.

His only previous visit to

Cheltenham, however, ended with a fall at the second-last after several indifferent jumps. "He didn't tell me," Ward says, "but he'd pulled a muscle in his back, which was put right and

**RICHARD EDMONDSON**  
NAP: Sally Scally  
(Taunton 2.10)  
NB: Eurolink The Lad  
(Taunton 5.10)

now he's fine. He loved being at Cheltenham, he plumped himself up like a peacock, and he'd always schooled very well, but he's such a laid-back horse that he's better pushed out in front, when he takes more no-

tice. He's so nonchalant, he'll be saying, isn't this lovely, there's a bird in the field over there, oh, here comes a hurdle."

It is a temperament which should serve City Hall well in the mayhem of the Triumph, but could easily be too much for many of his rivals. "Obviously I'm frightened of all of them, including Zafarabad," Ward says, "but Zafarabad hasn't really been tested so far and you won't know how good he is until he gets to Cheltenham."

Certainly, at odds of around 7-2 against twice-raced Zafarabad, compared to the 12-1 about City Hall, there can be little doubt where any value lies.

Ward's optimism was in stark contrast yesterday to the mood at Jim Old's yard, where a cough has affected many of the residents, including Collier Bay, the 1996 Champion Hurdle winner. Old has not entirely abandoned hope that Collier Bay will attempt to reclaim his crown, but time is not on his side. "I wouldn't say that Collier Bay has no chance of running in the Champion," Old said yesterday. "It appears that the older horses have plenty of immunities and we are hopeful that they will be able to bounce back, but we have only got two weeks. Most other trainers have had a bug of some sorts and I had been



Jim Old: Trains Collier Bay

very lucky, but now it has hit us at just the wrong time."

The entries for several of the Festival's handicaps were published yesterday, and those who like to back topical horses will look no further than Top Cees. The performance of Lyndas Ramsden's gelding in a Newmarket handicap three years ago was the subject of a 19-day High Court libel trial which ended last week. He is entered in both the Coral Cup and the County Hurdle.

## Coral Cup betting

	H	N	L	T
Unshakable Rover	16-1	16-1	16-1	32
Splendid Tyne	14-1	13-1	13-1	32
My Strand	16-1	16-1	16-1	32
Buddha Boy	16-1	16-1	16-1	32
Comanche Cross	16-1	16-1	16-1	32
Melody Mold	16-1	16-1	16-1	32
Moors	14-1	16-1	16-1	32
Northby	16-1	16-1	16-1	32
Royal Angels	16-1	16-1	16-1	32
Spring Rhythms	14-1	14-1	14-1	32
Lea De Fleur	16-1	26-1	26-1	32
Top Cees	14-1	26-1	26-1	32
C - Cox N - Wilson H L - Lockhart T - Tot				

**Coral Cup betting**  
Horses C H N L T  
Unshakable Rover 16-1 16-1 16-1 32  
Splendid Tyne 14-1 13-1 13-1 32  
My Strand 16-1 16-1 16-1 32  
Buddha Boy 16-1 16-1 16-1 32  
Comanche Cross 16-1 16-1 16-1 32  
Melody Mold 16-1 16-1 16-1 32  
Moors 14-1 16-1 16-1 32  
Northby 16-1 16-1 16-1 32  
Royal Angels 16-1 16-1 16-1 32  
Spring Rhythms 14-1 14-1 14-1 32  
Lea De Fleur 16-1 26-1 26-1 32  
Top Cees 14-1 26-1 26-1 32  
C - Cox N - Wilson H L - Lockhart T - Tot

# A whole new Gulf game to Woosie

## Golf

Andy Farrell  
reports from Doha

LONG gone are the days when Ian Woosnam, a few friends and many cans of baked beans, used in travel round the European Tour in a caravan. "It would need wings these days," Woosnam said.

Woosnam can never have imagined celebrating his 40th birthday in Doha as he did on Monday. Whatever form the celebrations took, they would have been discreet; Qatar is a more strictly Islamic state when it comes to things like alcohol than Dubai. The Welshman woke up the following morning with a headache and a walking stick, a present from his caddie, Phil "Wobbly" Morley.

Woosnam and Jose Maria Olazabal, whose own celebration on Monday of his Dubai Classic victory included eating his first full meal for five days as his throat infection eased, head the field for the inaugural Qatar Masters. With a prize fund of £600,000, six other Ryder Cup players and the captain, Seve Ballesteros, have also made the short journey up the Gulf.

They have found another course in superb condition, thanks to the huge quantities of water it guzzles each day. Set among limestone rocks, the two dominant features of the lay-out are length, it measures 7,273 yards, and the constant wind.

"I find this course very tricky," Woosnam said. "I will have to drive better than in Dubai last week and the greens are firm with lots of grain. Then there is this strong wind blowing all the time."

These, however, were his personal concerns about not yet having found a "feel for this course". Woosnam is fully appreciative that he is getting to play at all. "The facility and the set-up here is great," he added.

Next year a third Gulf venue may be added at Abu Dhabi, which is in the good news, bad news category for Woosnam. "I don't really enjoy travelling too much any more, but if we can't get good sponsors and good tournaments in Europe, then we have to come to places like Qatar and Dubai."

"I think I have five good years left at the top level," he added. "But if I feel I cannot play up to my full potential I shall consider not playing any more. I don't have the power that I used to have. I have lost my nerve a bit, I lay up instead of going for the big carry, but I probably get more birdies that way. That's where experience is an advantage."

## Border steps in for Marsh

### Cricket

ALLAN BORDER, the former Australian captain, is to dislodge for the country's coach, Geoff Marsh, at next month's limited overs tournament in Sharjah.

Border, who retired from Tests after Australia's 1994 tour to South Africa, has agreed to take up the 10-day appointment as a temporary replacement for Marsh, who has been allowed to miss the tournament after having to go into hospital because of his asthma in all of his three previous trips to Sharjah.

Border will not become a full-time coach, however. "Everyone seems to be reading something into it, but I've got so many commitments now that what I don't want to do is move into coaching," he said.

"I don't mind doing the odd one-off with the under-19 side or the A team when they are sole commitments, but I'm not interested in a permanent role. Geoff Marsh is away eight or nine months a year—I'm not interested in that."

The former Pakistan captain Wasim Akram dismissed allegations of involvement in match fixing and betting as media speculation when he arrived in Port Elizabeth yesterday for the rest of the South African tour.

"Nobody's stupid. I've been playing top cricket, earning good money, so why would I do such a stupid thing?" said Wasim, who last month appeared before a parliamentary committee assigned to investigate the allegations.

# Ffrench banned for riding 'non-trier'

THE jockey Royston Ffrench was handed a seven-day ban under the "non-triers" rule at Wolverhampton yesterday.

Ffrench, last season's champion apprentice, was found guilty of tenderly riding Lady Jazz, who finished fourth, beaten 11½ lengths, in the first division of the Capricorn Maiden Stakes behind the winner, Shaanti Romance.

Naughton, who watched the race on television at his Epsom

base, was incensed at the decision. "I was just minding my own business watching the racing and they announce Royston has got seven days, my filly is banned for 30 days and I've been fined £400 quid," he said. "I ran her only seven days ago and she was fit as a flea today. Royston gave her four or five backhands—she couldn't have done any better. I will definitely be appealing."

Ffrench was not at the track, was handed a £1,400 fine while Lady Jazz was suspended from running again for 30 days.

Ffrench's ban, which takes in 14, 19, 21, 23 and 26 March, means the rider will miss the opening day of Doncaster's curtain-raising turf meeting later this month, but he will be available for the Lincoln Handicap.

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base, was incensed at the decision. "I was just minding my own business watching the racing and they announce Royston has got seven days, my filly is banned for 30 days and I've been fined £400 quid," he said. "I ran her only seven days ago and she was fit as a flea today. Royston gave her four or five backhands—she couldn't have done any better. I will definitely be appealing."

Ffrench was more philosophical, saying: "The stewards have come to a conclusion and you have to take the penalty. I'll have to have a talk with Mr Naughton and my gov'nor, Mr Cuiman, and see what they say concerning an appeal."

Geoff Foster, the stewards' secretary, defended the ban. "We had people ringing up the course concerned about the horse's running, but by then the

stewards were on the case and already inquiring. They asked themselves whether the horse was put in the race and asked for an effort at any stage and they found that the answer was no on both counts," he said.

Lady Jazz was settled in rear by Ffrench in the early stages until making steady headway in the straight and running on well in the closing stages.

**3.30 FORDELLA CUP HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS C) £7,000 added 3m 9 Penalty Value £4,925**  
1 US3P IMPERIAL VINTAGE (20) (C) Miss Wiliams 8 26 — N Williamson  
2 22P RECTOR HOLLOW (20) (C) The East Cupper T Foster 8 11 — T Thornto 8  
3 21H TIME ENOUGH (20) (C) The London Partnership B Cooke 8 11 — S McNeil  
4 19P2 LORD OF THE WEST (20) (C) (Lester & Westerby) Jj O'Neill 8 11 — P Cartney  
5 18P2 STYLISH STYLING (20) (C) (Lester & Westerby) Jj O'Neill 8 11 — P Cartney  
6 15P2 NEVADA PRINCE (19) (C) (D) (Former 2nd France 8 11) — J Magoffin (7)  
7 21-21L BROGEESE LADY (45) (C) (Straight Ride) G Gaskell 6 107 — A Maggs  
8 20P2 COURSES COURSE (20) (C) (Lester & Westerby) Jj O'Neill 8 11 — P Cartney  
9 19P2 EARLY DRAVEN (20) (C) (Lester & Westerby) Jj O'Neill 8 11 — P Cartney  
10 20P2 GOLDEN STARS (20) (C) (Lester & Westerby) Jj O'Neill 8 11 — P Cartney  
11 20P2 HORSEMAN (20) (C) (Lester & Westerby) Jj O'Neill 8 11 — P Cartney  
12 20P2 HUNTER'S HUNTER (20) (C) (Lester & Westerby) Jj O'Neill 8 11 — P Cartney  
13 20P2 HUNTER'S HUNTER (20) (C) (Lester & Westerby) Jj O'Neill 8 11 — P Cartney  
14 20P2 HUNTER'S HUNTER (20) (C) (Lester & Westerby) Jj O'Neill 8 11 — P Cartney  
15 20P2 HUNTER'S HUNTER (20) (C) (Lester & Westerby) Jj O'Neill 8 11 — P Cartney  
16 20P2 HUNTER'S HUNTER (20) (C) (Lester & Westerby) Jj O'Neill 8 11 — P Cartney  
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## Sporting hero is a term that should be handled with discretion

ONE of the occupational hazards of a veteran sportswriter is the scorn that historical perspective raises in an advancing generation. Things may be better than they were, maybe not, but how many sports performers today will be remembered as genuine heroes?

Beginning last night, Sky Sports 3 is broadcasting a series of 20 interviews with great figures from Britain's sporting past conducted by the old ITV hand Dickie Davies, who was big on the box when some of today's star presenters were in nappies.

First up was the 1980 Olympic 800 metres gold medalist, Steve Ovett, to be followed by his great middle-distance rival, Sebastian Coe, and such notables as John Charles, Tom

Finney, Colin Cowdrey, Mary Peters, Stirling Moss, Willie Carson, Roger Bannister, Gareth Edwards and Henry Cooper. Davies's personal choices, all qualify as sporting heroes.

I'm certain, anyway, that the status ought not to be awarded lightly. It has as much, maybe more, to do with presence as achievement, a matter of people confronting fame and time and themselves.

A friend, Tom Cushman, who writes sensitive sports columns for the *San Diego Union-Tribune* recalls the thrill he felt as a college freshman track athlete when hearing of Bannister's four-minute mile. "It was unbelievable," he said. "From that moment Bannister was, and still is, one of my sporting heroes."

The fact that Bannister did not win an Olympic gold medal is irrelevant. Henry Cooper didn't make it to world class, his only attempt at the heavyweight championship ending in bloody defeat by Muhammad Ali in 1966, but the years since then have not diminished his popularity. Stirling Moss failed to win the drivers' world championship but he remains unquestionably a hero of motor racing.

Last year I attended a dinner at which Charles was given a lifetime award for his great feats in football. Most of those present had never seen the Welshman play, not even on television, but they knew a hero when they saw one. Many footballers today state the desire to be with a

club that offers them a chance of winning championship and cup medals. A brilliant England international, all Finney has to show for a club career spent entirely in Preston North End's colours is a losing medal in the 1954 FA Cup final. Recently, I was recalling for

some young people (this happens all too frequently these days) a period through which I lived as a goggle-eyed boy. Television was only a rumour so a sense of sporting heroism could only be gained from newspapers and radio. Importantly, I later discovered that one or two of the heroes who thrived in my imagination, Stanley Matthews and Denis Compton for example, were heroes to many millions.

I still find sport a better area than most to look for truth. Without question we stand in the middle of a national sports boom: growing attendances, better-prepared performers who in some case get more for their labours than people are paid for running countries. Pre-

cisely where we stand in the matter of heroes is less apparent.

If Davies had come a little further forward in time he could have found other candidates. Ian Botham was a natural hero of cricket. For all his technical limitations Frank Bruno was, in a curious way, heroic. Lennox Lewis may be the most accomplished heavyweight out there but somehow heroism doesn't fit with him.

Sporting hero is a term that should be handled with care and discretion. Nick Faldo has climbed higher in golf than one of Davies's heroes, Tony Jacklin, and is unquestionably a hero but Jacklin's success was totally unexpected and therefore more heroic.

Once you get into something like

this, I frankly don't know where you stop and how the leading figures in British sport today will be looked upon by historians of the future. Nobody will have in think twice about Steven Redgrave, but it's difficult to imagine that Paul Gascoigne will qualify as an all-time British hero and, despite his prowess, Alan Shearer may never be spoken in the same breath as many illustrious figures in the fairly recent history of football.

All the heroes Davies has selected relished personal success and took pleasure in the honours that came to them. Circumstances saved their greatness from the modern carnival vulgarity that would have debased it. That was good for sport and good for the concept of heroism.



KEN JONES

## Bosnich to turn up Villa vocals

RAUCOUS laughter broke out as the Aston Villa party queued to board the flight back from their 1-0 defeat at Atletico Madrid. When it subsided, Dwight Yorke could be heard mocking the England cricket fans among his colleagues and the press corps for being so foolish as to imagine that they might win the recent Test match.

The Tobagan insisted that the West Indians had been trying with their prey, knowing they had done enough to prevail. The cameo typified a perceptible improvement in Villa's morale during the first week of John Gregory's management. Yet a nagging doubt persists that Atletico, like Yorke's compatriots, have also established a platform for progress.

Randy Antic certainly believes a place in the last four of the Uefa Cup is very much within Atletico's grasp, despite Villa's wresting control of Tuesday's quarter-final, first-leg match following Christian Vieri's 42nd-minute penalty. After noting that it was a "game of two halves" - which proved his time on Luton's books was not wasted - the Yugoslav coach set out a plausible case for Spanish optimism.

"It will be a hard game at Villa Park because there will be a great atmosphere and they will play differently," he said. "But we haven't lost an away match in Europe for two years, and while that is just a statistic, we have to be confident."

Antic was almost guilty of underplaying Atletico's record. In last season's Champions League they were the only side to beat the eventual winners, Borussia Dortmund, triumphing 2-1 in Germany. They also

won 4-1 at Widzew Lodz, of Poland, and drew with Steaua Bucharest and Ajax.

This time they have won 2-0 at Leicester, after taking only a 2-1 advantage to Filbert Street, and returned unbowed from Salouka and Zagreb. In that context, Antic was entitled to view Villa's failure to score the goal their growing assurance merited as potentially crucial to the eventual outcome.

Mark Bosnich, who exuded an aura of being unbeatable during the early siege, sensed that Atletico were satisfied with their lead. "I don't whether they put so much into the first half that they ran out of steam, but it seemed to me they settled for 1-0. With the away-goals rule as it is, you can understand that mentality."

The goalkeeper's brilliance was all the more impressive for the barrage of missiles from the crowd to which he was subjected. He incurred a caution for time-wasting as he sought to draw the attention of an otherwise impeccable Italian referee, but there is no appeals procedure.

Indeed, only Alan Wright of Gregory's possible starting XI for the return will not be at risk of missing the first semi-final by being booked again. It will be scant consolation to Bosnich to know that Atletico can expect to be fined provided the referee or the Uefa delegate reports the trouble.

The Australian is looking to Villa's supporters to intimidate Atletico by legitimate means on

17 March. "We have to make it as hot as possible for them because they're a top side and have been to some big places. These teams pride themselves on their counter-attacking skills, but if we keep it tight at the back we've got a better than even chance."

Villa's captain, Gareth Southgate, expressed disappointment at a scoreline which he confessed he would have accepted beforehand and warned against getting carried away. "There's no question that the hard work is still to be done. However long it takes, we have to score twice. Atletico are an outstanding team and with the players they've got they'll break very well."

By quashing speculation that he planned to leave during the summer, Southgate has given an added fillip to Gregory's honeymoon period. It is early doors, as Ron Atkinson would say, but the new manager, now entering his second week as Brian Little's successor, appears to have restored stability on and off the pitch.

Gregory, like Little, was a member of the last Villa side to reach this stage of the competition 20 years ago, when they went out to Barcelona. The prospects of going at least one stage further are finely balanced. In the meantime, he may well be cautioning that while Continental football is the icing on the cake, the Premiership is Villa's head and butter, and survival has yet to be assured.

## Durie has no wish to watch collision

By Ken Gaunt

GORDON DURIE is so traumatised by the head injury he suffered in the game against Kilmarnock he says he will never watch replays of the match.

The Rangers and Scotland striker spent three nights in Glasgow's Southern General Hospital after an accidental clash of heads with Gary Holt last week that left him severely concussed.

The Scotland striker has lost weight and was still suffering

headaches at the start of this week. He is expected to be out of football for up to a month.

"One thing is certain, I never want to watch that match," he said. "It's scary because I can't remember anything about it. The first thing I knew was when I woke up in the ambulance. The medics asked me what was going on and I didn't have a clue."

"Now I bear some people are demanding better protection and I have to agree. But it's a grey area for me. I mean I felt fine then collapsed. The possi-

bility risks for the future have been spelled out to me but I am hopeful of making a full recovery."

Celtic's astonishing pulling power was revealed today with the club closing its waiting list for season tickets, with 10,000 people in the queue. The club already has 42,500 season-ticket holders, the most in Britain. It means Celtic are already close to filling Parkhead, which will have a 60,000 capacity when rebuilding work is completed later this year.

The news comes on the

fourth anniversary of the takeover by the present managing director, Fergus McCann, and he is thrilled at their progress.

"The desire to see Celtic has never been greater," he said. "I would like to record our thanks for the incredible backing every week. We have come a long way in a short time. But I believe we are only a short way along the road of Celtic's potential."

Celtic, under the stewardship of their Dutch coach, Wim Jansen, are still on course for the treble, having already lifted the League Cup. They are two points clear at the top of the table and face Dundee United in the quarter-finals of the Scottish Cup on Sunday.

Fans have been flocking to Parkhead with the club's average gate 48,409 compared to 22,888 four years ago. Turnover has also risen dramatically with £15,525,000 being generated in the first six months of this year compared to £8,756,000 in the whole of the 1993-94 season.

## Brussels talks about tickets

By John Lichfield  
in Paris

THE French organisers of the World Cup will defend the small allocation of tickets to foreign fans as a "security measure" in a crucial meeting in Brussels today in which Jacques Lambert, the director general of the organising committee, will meet the EU Commission responsible for free and fair competition, Karel van Miert.

The European Commission has warned that the system used for allocating tickets, reserving 60 per cent for people with French addresses and bank accounts, may break EU free trade laws. But Mr Lambert plans to argue that this method is essential to segregate fans.

If the EU insists on its interpretation of European law, the organising committee will insist that it is still too late to change allocations for the group matches.

THE Sheffield United fans who demonstrated against their chairman, Mike McDonald, at Bramall Lane on Tuesday have had a result - the announcement of his resignation.

The supporters were protesting against McDonald after the surprise decision of the manager, Nigel Spackman, to leave the First Division club on Monday.

McDonald reacted by announcing yesterday that he intends to stand down. "I am not here to be abused. I have always said from the outset that, on the football side, once the fans don't want me, I will go. We are in the quarter-finals of the FA Cup, in the top six in the League and the fans are not happy for some reason or other. I have said all along that, if they are not happy with me, then I won't be there."

However, McDonald will still be part of Sheffield United plc. "I will get on with developing the ground around the stadium," he said.

Lou Macari, tipped to become Spackman's successor, yesterday said he has had no contact with the Blades over their vacancy - but that he would jump at the chance. The former Birmingham, Celtic and Stoke manager has been out of work since July last year after leaving Stoke.

"Obviously I am flattered that my name has been mentioned and I would love the chance to get back into management," Macari said. "I do know Mr McDonald, and maybe in the next 24 hours things will change, although there has been no approach. We will just have to wait and see."

The Bolton Wanderers defender Mike Whitlow has been ruled out for the rest of the season with knee ligament damage.

The 30-year-old left-back, a £700,000 signing from Leicester City earlier this season, was carried off during a game at Barnsley on 3 January.

Everton's veteran defender



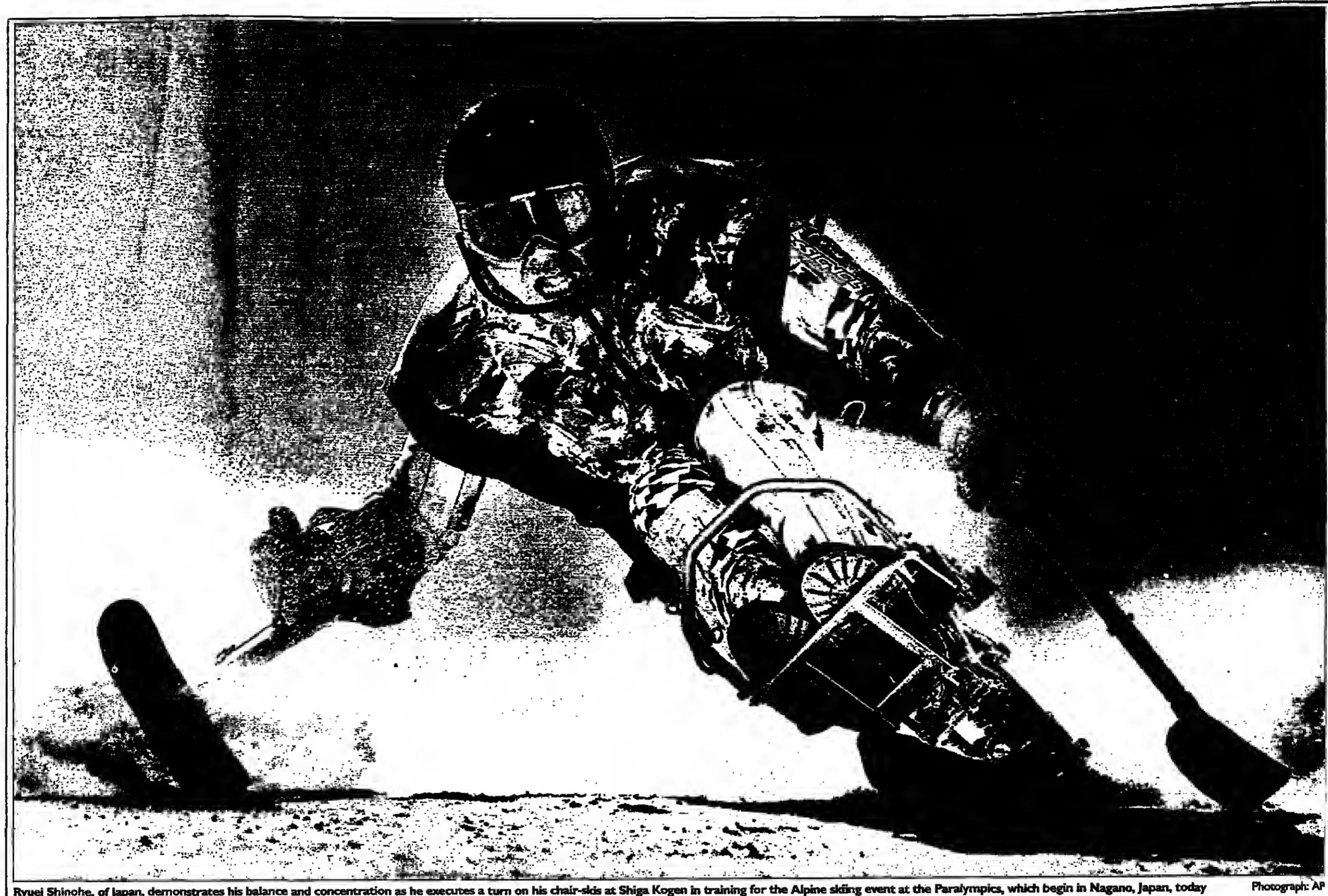
GERMANS  
FORMIDABLE UP FRONT, UNBEATABLE AT THE BACK

Continental

TYRES - ENGINEERED IN GERMANY

صبا من الأجل





Ryuei Shinohara, of Japan, demonstrates his balance and concentration as he executes a turn on his chair-ski at Shiga Kogen in training for the Alpine skiing event at the Paralympics, which begin in Nagano, Japan, today

Photograph: AP

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD  
No. 3550. Thursday 5 March 1998  
By Sparks  
Wednesday's solution

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
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11			12				
13		14	15	16			
17	18		19	20	21		
22		23	24				
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27		28					

**ACROSS**

- 1 Consider badly-produced guide, one put out by a radio entertainer (7)
- 5 Acting macho, behaves as some kind of goat (7)
- 9 Story conveyed by regular client (7)
- 10 Woman's garment found in public service vehicle on rank (7)
- 11 The writer of Acts? (9)
- 12 Respond by putting on a show (5)
- 13 Like twangy sound produced by organ? (5)
- 15 Student into exciting hobbies participating finally in winter sports event (9)
- 17 Very good time to include a modern music genre in TV programme (4,5)
- 19 Underworld giant? (5)

**DOWN**

- 1 Lack of restraint originally displayed in a book by unknown author? (7)
- 2 Idiot hitching lift on a ship (7)
- 3 Vet finally holds up article swallowed by brown cow (5)
- 4 Worthy aim: let's be merry (9)
- 5 Main room on passage (5)
- 6 Where you'd find Alice and Dorothy, in shirt? (9)
- 7 Tokyo paper given a more artistic look (7)
- 8 Tense used in sentence (7)
- 14 Cornish resort in which goddess meets monarch's double (9)
- 16 Part of stopper, one she broke, unfortunately (3,4)
- 17 Academic pupil (7)
- 18 State of Parisians appearing in one kind of synthetic material (7)
- 19 Instrument engaging catch in towing ring (7)
- 21 Palace staff (7)
- 23 Small cube conveyed by boat (5)
- 24 End wall battered at first in high wind (5)

**SOLUTIONS**

BACKPACKS AITCH  
AODIE IS  
SIMONE LIPINSKI  
BAGGAGE  
EISTEADDO STEVE  
CHERUB  
QUARRREL SHEBEEN  
UTTO DINE  
ANERDIO PREACHY  
OMESOUR  
RIBS OFFPUTTING  
IAE IERLL  
LATERALLY IMAGO  
LGEEAO  
EIHOS SEDENIARY

## Liverpool to investigate Collymore allegations

### Football

By Paul Walker

STEVE HARKNESS will be at the centre of a full inquiry by Liverpool into allegations that he hurled racial abuse at his former team-mate, Stan Collymore.

The 27-year-old defender has been accused by Collymore of making racist comments during Saturday's fixture between the two Premiership clubs, which ended in a 2-1 victory for Aston Villa with Collymore scoring twice.

It has also emerged that Collymore complained about the abuse to the referee, Graham Poll, during the match.

Liverpool spent the day yesterday digesting the implications of Collymore's claims and then issued a statement promising to launch their own investigation.

Their manager, Roy Evans, was out of the country on a scouting mission in Europe, while their chief executive,

Peter Robinson, was away from the club on personal business. Both men were contacted during the day, but it has been decided to delay any further discussions until they can discuss the situation with Harkness in person.

It seems likely that the club solicitor, Kevin Dooley, and their chief executive designate, Rick Parry, will also be involved in the meetings.

Liverpool's statement, issued through a club spokesman, Ian Cotton, said: "These are serious allegations which have been made against Steve Harkness – ones that the club do not take lightly. But until we have had the opportunity to sit down and discuss the matter with Steve, Liverpool Football Club are not in a position to comment further on the matter."

Liverpool know they will have to consider their and the player's position carefully in the light of several well-publicised cases of players being subjected to racial abuse in the recent

past. Only last week, West Ham's Evol Berkovich claimed that Blackburn Rovers players made anti-Semitic comments to him during the FA Cup tie between the clubs, and it caused the Israeli midfielder to be subjected to torrents of abuse from Blackburn fans during the replay at Ewood Park.

Now, with the Professional Footballers' Association at the forefront of a "Kick Racism Out Of Football" campaign, Liverpool will have to be thorough and open about their own internal investigations.

The Football Association will await the outcome with concern. Initially, it has said that it will wait for the referee's report to see whether he mentioned the incidents on the pitch, and also an alleged tunnel confrontation and an alleged attempt by Harkness to continue the row with Collymore by bursting into the Villa players' dressing-room.

However, Poll said yesterday that he had seen and heard nothing and would not be reporting the incident, although he admitted Collymore had complained to him on the pitch about his treatment.

Now the FA will have to decide whether to launch its own investigation without a statement from Poll.

Poll said: "I cannot include things in my report that I didn't see or didn't hear. I heard nothing on the pitch and I saw nothing in the tunnel, the players were all back in the dressing rooms by the time that me and my two assistants left the pitch."

An FA spokesman said: "There is a route for Villa to complain to us if they so wish. Obviously we are concerned about what is being claimed, and we will be keeping an eye on the situation."

Organisers of the "Kick Racism Out Of Football" campaign have called on Collymore and Villa to make an official complaint.

Piana Power, the national co-ordinator of the campaign, said: "If Stan Collymore is suggesting that is what happened to him, then he must make a complaint to the Professional Footballers' Association and the Football Association."

"Unless there is an official complaint then often nothing can be investigated."

He added: "It is generally accepted that there used to be a bigger problem with racism among players than there is now, but this allegation is not a totally isolated incident."

"There is still a problem with racism in the game and players have a responsibility to give a lead to supporters."

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© Publishing PLC, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, and printed at Mirror Colour Print, 50 Albion Road, Watford

Back issues available from Historic Newspapers 01988 840370

Registered as a newspaper with the Post Office

5/3/1998

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